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THE
WORKS
OF THE
BRITISH POETS,
WITH
LIVES OF THE AUTHORS.

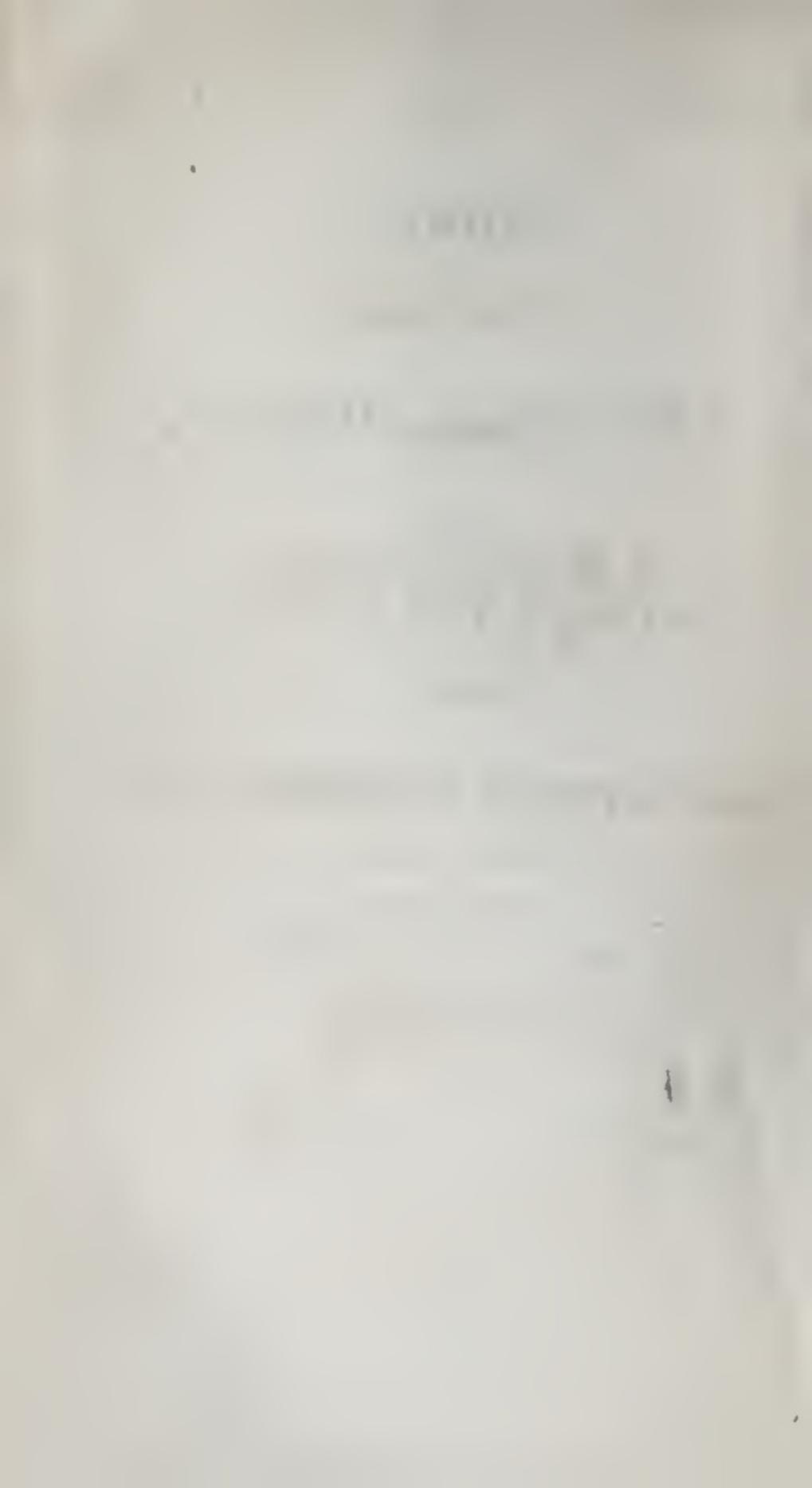
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SELECTIONS

FROM THE

TRAGEDIES

OF

ÆSCHYLUS, SOPHOCLES,

AND

EURIPIDES.

30401

LIFE OF ÆSCHYLUS.

ÆSCHYLUS was an Athenian of an honourable family, distinguished for the sublimity of his genius and the ardour of his martial spirit. In his youth he had read Homer with the warmest enthusiasm; and finding his great master unrivalled in the possession of the Epic, he early conceived the design of creating a new province for himself, and forming the drama; so much we may be allowed to infer from the fable, that whilst he was yet a boy Bacchus appeared to him as he lay asleep in a vineyard, and commanded him to write tragedies. This noble design he soon executed, and before the twenty-fifth year of his age began to entertain his countrymen with representations worthy of an Athenian audience. He had pursued these studies about ten years, when Darius invaded Greece. His generals, Datis and Artaphernes, with an army of two hundred thousand foot and ten thousand horse, were now advanced to the plains of Marathon, distant only ten miles from Athens. The danger, which threatened his country, called forth the martial spirit of our poet; and very honourable mention is made of him, and his two brothers, Cynægirus and Amynias, for their eminent valour in that battle: to have wanted courage on such an occasion would have been a mark of the most abject baseness; but to be distinguished in an action,

where every soldier was a hero, is a proof of superior merit: in a picture representing the battle of Marathon the portrait of Æschylus was drawn: this was all the honour that Miltiades himself received from the state for his glorious conduct on that day; he was placed at the head of the ten commanders, and drawn in the act of encouraging the soldiers and beginning the battle.

Some time after, Cynægirus was one of the four naval commanders, who with an armament of one thousand Greeks, defeated thirty thousand Persians; but he lost his life in the action.

Ten years after the battle of Marathon, when Xerxes made that immense preparation to revenge the defeat of his father, we find the two surviving brothers exerting their courage in the sea-fight off Salamis: here Amynias, too boldly laying hold of a Persian ship, had his hand lopped off with a sabre; but Æschylus defended him, and saved his life; and the Athenians decreed him the first honours, because he was the first to attack the commander of the Persian fleet, shattered the ship to pieces, and killed the Satrap. It is observed that the two brothers were ever after inseparable. The following year Æschylus acquired fresh glory in the battle of Platæa, where the brave Persian Mardonius was defeated and slain.

Having taken this active part in the three most memorable battles that grace the annals of Greece, and distinguished himself as a good citizen and a brave man, he returned with ardour to his former studies, and completed his design of making the drama a regular, noble, and rational entertainment. He wrote about seventy tragedies, and was in great esteem with his countrymen: but upon some disgust in the latter part of his life he retired from Athens to the court of Hiero king of Sicily, where about three years after he died, in the sixty-ninth

year of his age. The cause of this disgust is variously related: some impute it to his impatience of the rising fame of Sophocles, yet a young man, to whom the prize was adjudged against him; others to the preference given to the Elegies of Simonides, written in honour of those who fell in the field of Marathon.

But to have excelled in Elegy could have added no glory to the superior genius of Æschylus; neither does it appear probable that such a contest should have happened thirty years after the battle was fought. From the other charge one would wish to vindicate so great a name; and happily it carries its own confutation with it; for whether Sophocles was only seven or seventeen years younger than Æschylus, which is not precisely determined, he could not be a young man when the other was sixty-four; and we know that the prize was adjudged to the last exhibition of Æschylus, which consisted of his *Agamemnon*, the *Choephoræ*, the *Furies*, and a satyric piece. But the tragedy of the *Furies* gave great offence to the city; and the poet, whether for that or on some other pretence, was accused of impiety. His brother Amynias pleaded his cause: the Athenians were struck with this instance of fraternal affection, they reverenced their maimed veteran, and Æschylus was acquitted. But such a spirit was not formed to submit to the affront; it made too deep an impression to be effaced; and the poet quitted the city with great indignation, declaring with a noble pride that he would entrust his tragedies to posterity, certain that he should receive from thence the honour he deserved. This honour the Athenians soon paid to his noble works: by a decree of the senate, never granted to any other, they offered rewards to any man that should again exhibit his plays; they fre-

quently adjudged the prize to him after his decease, and acknowledged him *the Father of Tragedy*.

To comprehend the justness of this honourable appellation, and to form a precise idea of the originality of Æschylus, it will be necessary to trace the Tragic Muse from her birth to her yet infirm state, when this poet gave her strength, spirit, and dignity. The story has been told, it seems, twenty times already; let it not give offence if it be told once more: it shall be a short tale. Tragedy then was at first no more than a rustic song in honour of Bacchus, attending the sacrifice of a goat, an animal hated by the god because its bite is particularly hurtful to the vine. What was originally no more than an accidental frolic became an annual custom, next a public sacrifice, and thence an established rite: for as every thing in Pagan antiquity was sacred, sports and amusements were changed into feasts, and the temples were converted into theatres: but this by due degrees. The Grecians, advancing in polished manners, carried into their towns a feast that sprung from the leisure of the country: their best poets took a pride in composing these religious hymns to the honour of Bacchus, and embellished them with the agreeable entertainments of music and dancing. After a length of time, the songs advancing in perfection, it was found necessary to give the singer some relief; and that the company might be amused during the pauses of the music, an actor was introduced: his part could be no other than a single speech, setting forth that he represented Hercules, or Theseus, or some other hero of antiquity, and had performed such or such an illustrious achievement: at the next pause another personated character advanced; at the next, another; but each unrelated and unconnected with the other. This we imagine to be the state of things, till Thespis and

Phrynicus had the address to continue the same interlocutor through every pause of the music, and to make him the narrator of one uniform and continued story. The novelty had the good fortune to please ; and, as the stories were interesting, the songs in honour of Bacchus ceased to amuse, till by degrees they lost their original design, and took their colouring from the intermediate representation. Such was the rude state of tragedy, when Æschylus conceived the great design of forming it into a new species of poetry that should rival even the Epic in dignity. The humble arbour interwove with vine branches gave place to scenes of astonishing grandeur ; the actor, no longer mounted on the cart of Thespis, with his face smeared over with lees of wine, or covered with a mask formed from the bark of a tree, now trod a spacious stage, magnificently habited in a robe of honour and the stately buskin ; even the mask, that eternal disgrace of the Athenian theatre, wore a new and elegant form expressive of the character represented. But these exterior decorations were proofs only of the taste of Æschylus : his superior genius appeared in giving life to the piece, by introducing the dialogue, without which there could be no action ; and from this circumstance it is, that he is with the highest propriety called the Father of the Drama. It is commonly said that Æschylus never produced more than two speakers upon the stage at the same time ; there are proofs to the contrary, though he generally adhered to that simple plan : but the new part, which the Chorus now took, amply supplied what we should call that poverty of the stage.

The music and the dance could not, without infinite offence, be withdrawn from the gay and lively Athenians : Æschylus therefore retained the Ode and Music, which properly speaking constituted the original tragedy ; but he adapted it to his plan,

and interested it in the action ; thereby giving a unity of design to the whole, an agreeableness and splendour to the spectacle, and adding the force and spirit of Lyric poetry to the gravity and magnificence of the Tragic style : but such was the simplicity of ancient manners, supported by truth and decency, that the Chorus yet retained the moral and sacred air of the first institution ; hence we find it always grave, sententious, sublime, and ardent in the cause of liberty, virtue, and religion.

The state of Athens paid honours to Æschylus, which never were granted to any other poet : Aristophanes, who certainly was not deficient in taste, gave the preference to Æschylus : and Lycurgus, to whom the poetic world is so greatly indebted, erected statues alike to Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, and ordered their tragedies to be transcribed and preserved together. In pronouncing on their comparative merit, the best critics assign to Æschylus the high tragic dignity, to Sophocles harmonious elegance, to Euripides the moral and pathetic.

AGAMEMNON.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

Watchman.

Clytemnestra.

Herald.

Agamemnon.

Cassandra.

Ægisthus.

Chorus of Argive Senators.

AGAMEMNON.

IN this tragedy the reader will find the strongest traces of the genius of Æschylus, and the most distinguishing proofs of his skill. Great in his conception, bold and daring in his metaphors, strong in his passions, he here touches the heart with uncommon emotions. The odes are particularly sublime, and the oracular spirit that breathes through them, adds a wonderful elevation and dignity to them. Short as the part of Agamemnon is, the poet has the address to throw such an amiable dignity around him, that we soon become interested in his favour, and are predisposed to lament his fate. The character of Clytemnestra is finely marked; a high-spirited, artful, close, determined, dangerous woman. But the poet has no where exerted such efforts of his genius, as in the scene where Cassandra appears: as a prophetess, she gives every mark of the divine inspiration, from the dark and distant hint, through all the noble imagery of the prophetic enthusiasm; till, as the catastrophe advances, she more and more plainly declares it: as a suffering princess, her grief is plaintive, lively, and piercing; yet she goes to meet her death, which she clearly foretels, with a firmness worthy the daughter of

Priam and the sister of Hector: nothing can be more animated or more interesting than this scene. The conduct of the poet through this play is exquisitely judicious; every scene gives us some obscure hint, or ominous presage, enough to keep our attention always raised, and to prepare us for the event; even the studied caution of Clytemnestra is finely managed to produce that effect; whilst the secrecy, with which she conducts her design, keeps us in suspense, and prevents a discovery, till we hear the dying groans of her murdered husband.

The scene of this play is at Argos, before the palace of Agamemnon.

AGAMEMNON.

THE WATCHMAN*.

YE fav'ring gods, relieve me from this toil ;
Fix'd, as a dog, on Agamemnon's roof
I watch the live-long year, observing hence
The host of stars, that in the spangled skies
Take their bright stations, and to mortals bring
Winter and summer ; radiant rulers, when
They set, or rising glitter through the night.
Here now I watch, if haply I may see
The blazing torch, whose flame brings news from
Troy,
The signal of its ruin : these high hopes
My royal mistress, thinking on her lord,
Feeds in her heart. Meanwhile the dews of night
Fall on my couch, unvisited by dreams ;

* This watchman had his station assigned him upon the royal palace at Argos, to observe the signal which Agamemnon had promised to give Clytemnestra, when Troy should be taken. This specularis indicatio, this information by beacons, was said to have been invented by Sinon in the time of the Trojan war ; but *Æschylus* had a poetic right to attribute it to his hero.

For fear, lest sleep should close my eyes, repels
The soft intruder. When my spirits prompt me
To raise the song, or hum the sullen notes
Preventing slumber, then I sigh, and wail
The state of this unhappy house, no more
Well-order'd as of old. 'But may my toils
Be happily reliev'd ! Blaze, thou bright flame,
Herald of joy, blaze through the gloomy shades.—
And it does blaze.—Hail, thou auspicious flame,
That streaming thro' the night denouncest joy,
Welcom'd with many a festal dance in Argos !—
In the queen's ear I'll holla this, and rouse her
From her soft couch with speed, that she may teach
The royal dome to echo with the strains
Of choral warblings greeting this blest fire,
Bright sign that Troy is taken. Nor shall I
Forbear the prelude to the dance before her :
For by this watch, so prosperously concluded,
I to my masters shall assure good fortune.
Shall I then see my king return'd, once more
To grace this house ? and shall this hand once more
Hang on his friendly hand ?—I could unfold
A tale.—But, hush ; my tongue is chain'd : these
walls,
Could they but speak, would make discoveries.
There are who know this ; and to them this hint
Were plain : to those, that know it not, mysterious.

CHORUS.

The tenth slow year rolls on, since great in arms
The noble sons of Atreus, each exalted
To majesty and empire, royal brothers,
Led hence a thousand ships, the Argive fleet,
Big with the fate of Priam and of Troy ; .

A warlike preparation ; their bold breasts
 Breathing heroic ardour to high deeds ;
 Like vultures, which their unplumed offspring lost*,
 Whirl many a rapid flight, for that their toil
 To guard their young was vain : 'till some high
 power,

For they are dear to Phœbus, dear to Pan,
 And Jove, with pity hears their shrill-voiced grief,
 And sends, though late, the fury to avenge
 Their plunder'd nests on the unpitying spoilers.

So now the power of hospitable Jove†
 Arms against Paris, for th' oft-wedded dame‡,
 The sons of Atreus, bent to plunge the hosts
 Of Greece and Troy in all the toils, that sink
 The body down, the firm knee bow'd in dust,
 And the strong spear, e'er conquest crowns their
 helms,

Shiver'd in battle. These are what they are,
 And fate directs th' event : nor the bent knee,
 Libation pure, or supplicating tear,

* The religious turn, which the poet has given to this simile, adds a solemn grace to the beautiful imagery, the vulture being sacred to Apollo as the god of augury, to Pan as the patron of hunters, and to Jupiter as the protector of kings.

† We receive the highest ideas of the civilized manners and social sense of the ancients, from their religious observation of the rights of hospitality ; we have many instances of this in Homer, particularly in the interview of Glaucus and Diomede. Jupiter himself was the protector of these laws. To these laws Ovid alludes,

Ausus es hospitii temeratis advena sacris
 Legitimam nuptæ sollicitare fidem.

‡ Helena was said to have been carried off by Theseus, before she was wedded to Menelaus.

Can sooth the stern rage of those merciless pow'rs
 In whose cold shrine no hallow'd flame ascends*.
 But we, our age-enfeebled limbs unfit
 For martial toils, inglorious here remain,
 The staff supporting our weak steps, like children:
 For as the infant years have not attain'd
 The military vigour, wither'd age
 Crawls through the streets like helpless infancy,
 And passes as a day-dream.—But what tidings,
 What circumstances of fair event hath reach'd
 Thy royal ears, daughter of Tyndarus,
 Inducing thee to send the victims round?
 The shrines of all the gods, whose guardian cares
 Watch o'er this state, be they enthron'd in Heav'n,
 Or rule beneath the earth, blaze with thy presents;
 And from th' imperial dome a length'ned line
 Of torches shoot their lustre to the skies.
 O tell me what is fit for me to know,
 And prudence suffers to be told: speak peace
 To this anxiety, which one while swells
 Presaging ill, and one while from the victims
 Catches a gleam of hope, whose cheering ray
 Breaks through the gloom that darkens o'er my
 soul.

STROPHE.

It swells upon my soul; I feel the power†
 To hail th' auspicious hour,

* The Fates and the Furies, at whose rites no fire was used.

† The Chorus, seized with a sacred inspiration, records the omen which was given to the brother kings on their march from Argos. Two eagles, the one of dark plumage, the strongest and the swiftest of the kind, the other of a species somewhat inferior, seize a pregnant hare, and bear it in their talons to the palace of Agamemnon.

When, their brave hosts marching in firm array,
The heroes led the way.

The fire of youth glows in each vein,
And heaven-born confidence inspires the strain.

Pleas'd the omen to record,
That to Troy's ill-fated strand
Led each monarch, mighty lord,
Led the bold confederate band,

The strong spear quiv'ring in their vengeful hand.

Full in each royal chieftain's view,
A royal eagle whirls his flight ;
In plumage one of dusky hue,
And one his dark wings edg'd with white ;
Swift to th' imperial mansion take their way,
And in their armed talons bear,
Seiz'd in its flight, a pregnant hare,
And in those splendid seats enjoy their prey.

Sound high the strain, the swelling notes prolong,
Till conquest listens to the raptur'd song.

ANTISTROPHE.

The venerable seer, whose skill divine*

Knows what the Fates design,
On each bold chief, that for the battle burns,
His glowing eye-ball turns ;
And thus in high prophetic strains
The rav'ning eagles and their prey explains :

* The fate-foretelling Chalcas explains the omen, that the imperial eagles denote the royal brothers, and the capture of the hare their success in taking Troy ; but as the hare was pregnant, it was under the immediate protection of Diana, who, as goddess of the chase, was the guardian of the infant race of all animals that are Teræ naturæ : this the prophet fears is an indication of the anger of that goddess.

“ Priam’s haughty town shall fall,
 Slow they roll, the destined hours,
 Fate and fury shake her wall,
 Vengeance wide the ruin pours,
 And conquest seizes all her treasur’d stores.
 Ah, may no storm from th’ angry sky
 Burst dreadful o’er this martial train,
 Nor check their ardour, flaming high
 To pour the war o’er Troy’s proud plain !
 Wrath kindles in the chaste Diana’s breast :
 Gorg’d with the pregnant mother’s blood,
 And e’er the birth, her hapless brood,
 Hell-hounds of Jove, she hates your horrid feast.

Sound high the strain, the swelling notes prolong,
 Till conquest listens to the raptur’d song.

EPODE.

“ The virgin goddess of the chace,
 Fair from the spangled dew-drops that adorn
 The breathing flow’rets of the morn,
 Protectress of the infant race
 Of all that haunt the tangled grove,
 Or o’er the rugged mountains rove,
 She, beauteous queen, commands me to declare
 What by the royal birds is shown,
 Signal of conquest, omen fair,
 But darken’d by her awful frown.
 God of the distant-wounding bow,
 Thee, Pæan, thee I call ; hear us, and aid* ;
 Ah, may not the offended maid

* The prophet, impressed with the idea of the anger of Diana, invokes Apollo to appease his sister, that she might not raise any adverse winds to retard the expedition, nor demand any sacrifice of horrid and barbaric rites : by the first alluding

Give the sullen gales to blow,
 Adverse to this eager train,
 And bar th' unnavigable main :
 Nor other sacrifice demand,
 At whose barbaric rites no feast is spread ;
 But discord rears her horrid head,
 And calls around her murd'rous band :
 Leagued with hate, and fraud, and fear,
 Nor king, nor husband they revere ;
 Indignant o'er a daughter weep,
 And burn to stamp their vengeance deep.”
 Prophetic thus the reverend Chalcas spoke,
 Marking th' imperial eagles' whirling wings ;
 From his rapt lips the joyful presage broke,
 Success and glory to th' embattled kings.

Sound high the strain, th' according notes prolong,
 Till conquests listens to the raptur'd song.

STROPHE 1.

O thou*, that sit'st supreme above,

to the contrary winds which afterwards detained the fleet at Aulis ; by the latter, to the sacrifice of Iphigenia.—Thus far the Chorus has recorded the prophecy of Chalcas, and with as little obscurity as one has reason to expect in such oracular answers, except in the beginning of the epode, where the text is unhappily corrupted.

* The Chorus now reassumes its proper character, and begins this ode with a solemn address to Jupiter, illud, quiequid est, summum, if that name were agreeable to him ; for the ancients in their invocations of the gods, were under a superstitious dread of offending them, should they speak to them by a name ungrateful to their ears, or omit the name most pleasing to them. Him the Chorus reveres, as in him alone their anxious thoughts could find repose. Whoever he may be, that without this pious reverence exults in his might, he enjoys but a short-lived glory,

He meets a greater, and he dies.

Whatever name thou deign'st to hear,
 Unblam'd may I pronounce thee Jove !
 Immers'd in deep and holy thought,
 If rightly I conjecture ought,

Thy pow'r I must revere :
 Else vainly tost the anxious mind
 Nor truth, nor calm repose can find.
 Feeble and helpless to the light

The proudest of man's race arose,
 Though now, exulting in his might,

Dauntless he rushes on his foes ;
 Great as he is, in dust he lies ;
 He meets a greater, and he dies.

ANTISTROPHE 1.

He that, when conquest brightens round* ;

Swells the triumphal strain to Jove,
 Shall ever with success be crown'd.

Yet often, when to wisdom's seat
 Jove deigns to guide man's erring feet,

His virtues to improve ;

He to affliction gives command
 To form him with her chast'ning hand :
 The memory of her rigid lore,

On the sad heart imprinted deep,
 Attends him through day's active hour,
 Nor in the night forsakes his sleep.

* On the other hand, the man, who amidst his successes pays his grateful vows to Jupiter, shall have his prosperity continued to him. Though sometimes, when the god leads mortals to wisdom, he effects his purpose by afflictions ; the memory of which makes a deep impression on the sufferer, and compels him to be wise : even this is acknowledged as the effect of divine grace. This is the address of the Chorus to Jupiter, sober, manly, rational, and a fine prelude to the afflictions of Agamemnon next to be mentioned.

Instructed thus thy grace we own,
O thou, that sit'st on Heav'n's high throne !

STROPHE 2.

When now in Aulis' rolling bay*

His course the refluent floods refus'd,
And sick'ning with inaction lay
In dead repose th' exhausted train,
Did the firm chief of chance complain ?

No prophet he accus'd ;
His eyes towards Chalcis bent he stood,
And silent mark'd the surging flood.
Sullen the winds from Strymon sweep,
Mischance and famine in the blast,
Ceaseless torment the angry deep,
The cordage rend, the vessels waste,
With tedious and severe delay
Wear the fresh flow'r of Greece away.

ANTISTROPHE 2.

When, in Diana's name, the seer†
Pronounc'd the dreadful remedy

* The anger of Diana now shows itself, and the Grecian fleet is detained by adverse winds at Aulis; the consequence of this is briefly, but finely described; but even under this mortifying calamity the hero shows no impious discontent, accuses no god nor man; but stands in a melancholy silence with his eyes fixed on an opposite island, and observing the refluent flood.

† In the midst of this distress, the prophet declared, that the anger of the goddess would not be appeased, nor would the winds permit the fleet to sail out of the harbour, but by the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the beautiful daughter of Agamemnon: the anguish of his soul, and the conflicting passions of the father and the king, are here pathetically described, till at length the king prevails.

Utcunque ferent ea facta nepotes,
Vincit amor patriæ, laudumque immensa cupido.

More than the stormy sea severe,
 Each chieftain stood in grief profound,
 And smote his sceptre on the ground :

Then with a rising sigh
 The monarch, whilst the big tears roll,
 Express'd the anguish of his soul ;
 "Dreadful the sentence : not t' obey,
 Vengeance and ruin close us round :
 Shall then the sire his daughter slay,
 In youth's fresh bloom with beauty crown'd ?
 Shall on these hands her warm blood flow ?
 Cruel alternative of woe !

STROPHE 3.

This royal fleet, this martial host,
 The cause of Greece, shall I betray,
 The monarch in the father lost ?
 To calm these winds, to smooth this flood,
 Diana's wrath a virgin's blood*
 Demands : 'tis our's t' obey."

* There is something horrid in the superstition of ancient paganism, which often impelled even the most religious persons to actions that were shocking to humanity, and at the same time left them exposed to infamy and punishment, as if they had been voluntarily guilty. It was in the Fates, that Oedipus should kill his father, and marry his mother ; by the very methods which he took to avoid the completion of this oracle, and those the wisest which human providence could suggest, he was entangled in the fatal net ; yet the anger of the gods pursued him even to ruin, and the extermination of his family. Orestes was commanded by Apollo to kill his mother, with threats of the severest vengeance should he presume to disobey ; but no sooner was the deed done, than he was pursued by the Furies, and haunted even to distraction. So bere Agamemnon has this cruel alternative proposed to him, either to appease the anger of Diana, and purchase a favourable wind by the blood of his daughter, or to see this great armament of united Greece, her heroes, and her glory, unprofitably wasted at Aulis.

Bound in necessity's iron chain
 Reluctant nature strives in vain :
 Impure, unholy thoughts succeed,
 And dark'ning o'er his bosom roll ;
 Whilst madness prompts the ruthless deed,
 Tyrant of the misguided soul :
 Stern on the fleet he rolls his eyes,
 And dooms the hateful sacrifice.

ANTISTROPHE 3.

Arm'd in a woman's cause, around
 Fierc for the war the princes rose ;
 No place affrighted pity found.
 In vain the virgin's streaming tear,
 Her cries in vain, her pleading pray'r,
 Her agonizing woes.
 Could the fond father hear unmov'd ?
 The Fates decreed : the king approv'd :
 Then to th' attendants gave command
 Decent her flowing robes to bind,
 Prone on the altar with strong hand
 To place her, like a spotless hind ;
 And check her sweet voice, that no sound
 Unhallow'd might the rites confound.

EPODE.

Rent on the earth her maiden veil she throws,
 That emulates the rose ;
 And on the sad attendants rolling
 The trembling lustre of her dewy eyes,
 Their grief-impassion'd souls controlling,
 That ennobled, modest grace,
 Which the mimic pencil tries
 In the imag'd form to trace,
 The breathing picture shows :

And as, amidst his festal pleasures,
 Her father oft rejoic'd to hear
 Her voice in soft mellifluous measures
 Warble the sprightly-fancied air ;
 So now in act to speak the virgin stands ;
 But when the third libation paid,
 She heard her father's dread command's
 Enjoining silence, she obey'd :
 And for her country's good,
 With patient, meek, submissive mind
 To her hard fate resign'd,
 Pour'd out the rich stream of her blood.

What since hath past, I know not, nor relate ;
 But never did the prophet speak in vain,
 Th' afflicted, anxious for his future fate,
 Looks forward, and with hope relieves his pain.
 But since th' inevitable ill will come,
 Much knowledge to much misery is allied ;
 Why strive we then t' anticipate the doom,
 Which happiness and wisdom wish to hide ?

Yet let this careful, age-enfeebled band
 Breathe from our inmost soul one ardent vow,
 Now the sole guardians of this Apian land,
 " May fair success with glory bind her brow ! "

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

With reverence, Clytemnestra, I approach
 Thy greatness ; honour due to her that fills

The royal seat, yet vacant of its lord.
 If ought of glad import hath reach'd thy ear,
 Or to fair hope the victim bleeds*, I wish,
 But with submission to thy will, to hear.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The joy-importing morn springs, as they say,
 From night, her mother. Thou shalt hear a joy
 Beyond thy hopes to hear: the town of Priam
 Is fall'n beneath the conquering arms of Greece.

CHORUS.

What said'st thou? Passing credence fled thy word,

CLYTEMNESTRA.

In Troy Greece triumphs. Speak I clearly now?

CHORUS.

Joy steals upon me, and calls forth the tear.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thy glist'ning eye bespeaks an honest heart.

CHORUS.

Does ought of certain proof confirm these tidings?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

It does: why not? unless the Gods deceive us.

CHORUS.

Perchance the visions of persuasive dreams.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Sport of the slumb'ring soul; they move not me.

CHORUS.

Hath then some winged rumour spread these transports?

* On hearing good tidings, even though the report was uncertain, it was usual to sacrifice to good hope, and to send a share of the victims to their friends.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

As a raw girl's, thou hold'st my judgment cheap.
CHORUS.

How long hath ruin crush'd this haughty city?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

This night, that gave this infant morning birth.
CHORUS.

What sped could be the herald of this news?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The fire, that from the height of Ida sent
Its streaming light, as from th' announcing flame
Toreh blazed to toreh. First Ida to the steep
Of Lemnos; Athos' saered height received
The mighty splendor; from the surging baek
Of th' Hellespont the vig'rous blaze held on
Its smiling way, and like the orient sun
Illumes with golden-gleaming rays the head
Of rocky Macetas; nor lingers there,
Nor winks unheedful, but its warning flames
Darts to the streams of Euripus, and givcs
Its glittering signal to the guards that hold
Their high watch on Mcsapius. These enkindle
The joy-denouncing fires, that sprcad the blaze
To where Erica hoar its shaggy brow
Waves rudely. Unimpair'd the active flame
Bounds o'cr the level of Asopus, like
The jœund Moon, and on Cithæron's steep
Wakes a successive flame; the distant watch
Agnize its shine, and raise a brighter firc,
That o'er the lake Gorgopis straining holds
Its rapid course, and on the mountainous heights
Of Ægiplanetus huge, swift shooting spreads

The lengthen'd line of light. Thence onwards
waves

Its fiery tresses, eager to ascend
The crags of Prone, frowning in their pride
O'er the Saronic gulf: it leaps, it mounts
The summit of Arachne, whose high head
Looks down on Argos: to this royal seat
Thence darts the light that from th' Idæan fire
Derives its birth. Rightly in order thus
Each to the next consigns the torch, that fills
The bright succession, whilst the first in speed
Vies with the last: the promis'd signal this
Giv'n by my lord t' announce the fall of Troy.

CHORUS.

Anon my grateful praise shall rise to Heav'n:
Now, lady, would I willingly attend
Through each glad circumstance the wond'rous tale.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

This day the conquering Greeks are lords of Troy.
Methinks I hear the various clamours rise
Discordant through the city. Pour thou oil
In the same vase and vinegar, in vain
Would'st thou persuade th' unsocial streams to mix:
The captives' and the conqueror's voice distinct,
Marks of their different fortune, may'st thou hear:
Those rolling on the bodies of the slain,
Friends, husbands, brothers, fathers; the weak arms
Of children clasp'd around the bleeding limbs
Of hoary age, lament their fall, their necks
Bent to the yoke of slavery: eager these
From the fierce toils of war, who through the gloom
Of night rang'd wide, fly on the spoils, as chance
Not order, leads them; in the Trojan houses,

Won by their spears, they walk at large, reliev'd
 From the cold dews dropt from th' unshelter'd sky ;
 And at th' approach of eve, like those whose pow'r
 Commands security, the easy night
 Shall sleep unguarded. If with hallow'd rites
 They venerate the Gods that o'er the city,
 With those that o'er the vanquish'd country rule,
 And reverence their shrines, the conquering troops
 Shall not be conquer'd. May no base desire,
 No guilty wish urge them, enthrall'd to gain,
 To break through sacred laws. Behoves them now,
 With safety in their train, backward to plough
 The refluent wave. Should they return expos'd
 To th' anger of the Gods, vengcance would wake
 To seize its prey, might they perchance escape
 Life's incidental ills. From me thou hearest
 A woman's sentiment ; and much I wish,
 Their glories by no rude mischance depress'd
 To cull from many blessings the most precious.

CHORUS.

With manly sentiment thy wisdom, lady,
 Speaks well. Confiding in thy suasive signs,
 Prepare we to address the Gods ; our strains
 Shall not without their meed of honour rise.

PROS.

Supreme of kings, Jove ; and thou, friendly night,
 That wide o'er Heav'n's star-spangled plain
 Holdest thy awful reign,
 Thou, that with resistless might
 O'er Troy's proud tow'rs, and destin'd state,
 Hast thrown the secret net of fate,
 In whose enormous sweep the young, the old,
 Without distinction roll'd,

Are with unsparing fury dragg'd away
 To slavery and woe a prey :
 Thee, hospitable Jove, whose vengeful pow'r
 These terrors o'er the foe has spread,
 Thy bow long bent at Paris' head,
 Whose arrows know their time to fly,
 Not hurtling aimless in the sky,
 Our pious strains adore.

STROPHE 1.

The hand of Jove will they not own ;
 And, as his marks they trace,
 Confess he will'd, and it was done ?
 Who now of earth-born race
 Shall darc contnd that his high pow'r
 Deigns not with eye severe to view
 The wretch, that tramples on his law ?
 Hence with this impious lore :
 Learn that the sons accurs'd shall rue
 The madly daring father's pride,
 That furious drew th' unrighteous sword,
 High in his house the rich spoils stor'd,
 And the avenging Gods defied.

But be it mine to draw
 From wisdom's fount, pure as it flows,
 That calm of soul, which virtue only knows.
 For vain the shield, that wealth shall spread,
 To guard the proud oppressor's head,
 Who dares the rites of Justice to confound,
 And spurn her altars to the ground.

ANTISTROPHE 1.

But suasive is the voice of vice,
 That spreads th' insidious snare :

She, not conceal'd, through her disguise
 Emits a livid glare.
 Her vot'ry, like adult'rare brass,
 Unfaithful to its use, unsound,
 Proves the dark baseness of his soul ;
 Fond as a boy to chase
 The winged bird iight-flitting round,
 And bent on his pernicious play,
 Draws desolation on his state.
 His vows no God regards, when Fate
 In vengeance sweeps the wretch away.
 With base intent and foul,
 Each hospitable law defied,
 From Sparta's king thus Paris stole his bride.
 To Greece she left the shield, the spear,
 The naval armament of war;
 And, bold in ill, to Troy's devoted shore
 Destruction for her dow'ry bore.

STROPHE 2.

When through the gates her easy way
 She took, his pensive breast
 Each prophet smote in deep dismay,
 And thus his grief exprest,
 " What woes this royal mansion threat,
 This mansion, and its mighty lord ?
 Where now the chaste connubial bed ?
 The traces of her feet,
 By love to her blest consort led,
 Where now ? ah, silent, see, she stands ;
 Each glowing tint, each radiant grace,
 That charm th' enraptur'd eye, we trace ;
 And still the blooming form commands,
 Still honour'd, still ador'd,

Though careless of her former loves
 Far o'er the rolling sea the wanton roves :
 The husband, with a bursting sigh,
 Turns from the pictur'd fair his eye ;
 Whilst love, by absence fed, without control
 Tumultuous rushes on his soul.

ANTISTROPHE 2.

Oft as short slumbers close his eyes,
 His sad soul sooth'd to rest,
 The dream-created visions rise,
 With all her charms impress :
 But vain th' ideal scene, that smiles
 With rapt'rous love and warm delight ;
 Vain his fond hopes : his eager arms
 The fleeting form beguiles,
 On sleep's quick pinions passing light.”
 Such griefs, and more severe than these,
 Their sad gloom o'er the palace spread ;
 Thence stretch their melancholy shade,
 And darken o'er the realms of Greece.

Struck with no false alarms
 Each house its home-felt sorrow knows,
 Each bleeding heart is pierc'd with keenest woes ;
 When for the hero sent to share
 The glories of the crimson war,
 Nought, save his arms stain'd with their master's
 gore,
 And his cold ashes reach the shore.

STROPHE 3.

Thus in the dire exchange of war
 Does Mars the balance hold ;
 Helms are the scales, the beam a spear,
 And blood is weigh'd for gold.

Thus, for the warrior, to his friends
 His sad remains, a poor return,
 Sav'd from the sullen fire that rose
 On Troy's curst shore, he sends,
 Plac'd decent in the mournful urn.

With many a tear their dead they weep,
 Their names with many a praise resound ;
 One for his skill in arms renown'd ;
 One, that amidst the slaughter'd heap
 Of fierce-conflicting foes

Glorious in beauty's cause he fell :

Yet 'gainst th' avenging chief their murmurs swell
 In silence. Some in youth's fresh bloom
 Beneath Troy's tow'rs possess a tomb ;
 Their bodies buried on the distant strand,
 Seizing in death the hostile land.

ANTISTROPHE 3.

How dreadful, when the people raise
 Loud murmurs mix'd with hate !

Yet this the tribute greatness pays
 For its exalted state.

E'en now some dark and horrid deed
 By my presaging soul is fear'd ;

For never with unheedful eyes,

When slaughter'd thousands bleed,
 Did the just power's of Heaven regard

The carnage of th' ensanguin'd plain.
 The ruthless and oppressive pow'r

May triumph for its little hour ;

Full soon with all their vengeful train
 The sullen Furies rise,

Break his fell force, and whirl him down
 Through life's dark path, unpitied, and unknown.

And dangerous is the pride of fame,
 Like the red light'ning's dazzling flame.
 Nor envied wealth, nor conquest let me gain,
 Nor drag the conqueror's hateful chain.

EPODE.

But from these fires far streaming through the night
 Fame through the town her progress takes,
 And rapt'rous joy awakes ;
 If with truth's auspicious light
 They shine, who knows ? her sacred reign
 Nor fraud, nor falsehood dares profane.
 But who, in wisdom's school so lightly taught,
 Suffers his ardent thought
 From these informing flames to catch the fire;
 Full soon perchance in grief t' expire ?
 Yet when a woman holds the sovereign sway,
 Obsequious wisdom learns to bow,
 And hails the joy it does not know ;
 Though, as the glitt'ring visions roll
 Before her easy, credulous soul,
 Their glories fade away.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Whether these fires, that with successive signals
 Blaze through the night, be true, or like a dream
 Play with a sweet delusion on the soul,
 Soon shall we know. A herald from the shore -
 I see ; branches of olive shade his brows.
 That cloud of dust, rais'd by his speed, assures me
 That neither speechless, nor enkindling flames
 Along the mountains, will he signify
 His message ; but his tongue shall greet our ears
 With words of joy : far from my soul the thought
 Of other, than confirm these fav'ring signals.

CHORUS.

May he, that to this state shall form a wish
Of other aim, on his own head receive it.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS, HERALD.

HERALD.

Hail, thou paternal soil of Argive earth !
In the fair light of the tenth year to thee
Return'd, from the sad wreck of many hopes
This onc I save ; sav'd from despair e'en this ;
For never thought I in this honour'd earth
To share in death the portion of a tomb.
Hail then, lov'd earth ; hail, thou bright sun ; and
thou,

Great guardian of my country, supreme Jove ;
Thou, Pythian king, thy shafts no longer wing'd
For our destruction* ; on Scamander's banks
Enough we mourn'd thy wrath ; propitious now
Come, king Apollo, our defence. And all
Ye Gods, that o'er the works of war preside,
I now invoke ; thee, Mercury†, my avenger,
Rever'd by heralds, that from thee derive
Thcir high employ ; you heroes‡, to the war

* This alludes to the pestilence in the Grecian camp, by Homer ascribed to Apollo as a punishment for the affront offered to his priest Chryses.

† Mercury, as the messenger of the Gods, was esteemed the patron of heralds, whose character therefore was always held sacred.

‡ The Grecians, in their solemn invocations of the Gods, paid this reverence to the manes of their heroes, supposing them still to be the protectors of their country. Thus Xeno-

That sent us, friendly now receive our troops,
 The relics of the spear. Imperial walls,
 Mansion of kings, ye seats rever'd ; ye Gods,
 That to the golden sun before these gates
 Present your honour'd forms ; if e'er of old
 Those eyes with favour have beheld the king,
 Receive him now, after this length of time,
 With glory ; for he comes, and with him brings
 To you, and all, a light that cheers this gloom :
 Then greet him well ; such honour is his meed,
 The mighty king, that with the mace of Jove
 Th' avenger, wherewith he subdues the earth,
 Hath levell'd with the dust the tow'rs of Troy ;
 Their altars are o'erturnd, their sacred shrines,
 And all the race destroy'd. This iron yoke
 Fix'd on the neck of Troy, victorious comes
 The great Atrides, of all mortal men
 Worthy of highest honours. Paris now,
 And the perfidious state, shall boast no more
 His proud deeds unreveng'd ; stript of his spoils,
 The debt of justice for his thefts, his rapines,
 Paid amply, o'er his father's house he spreads
 With twofold loss the wide-involving ruin.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Joy to thee, herald of the Argive host.

phon represents Cyrus, when marching into the territories of the enemy, before he passed the line of division, to have sacrificed to Jupiter, and the other Gods, and, at the same time, to have invoked the heroes, the dwellers and guardians of Media ; and after he had passed, to have again sacrificed to the Gods, and propitiated the heroes, guardians of Assyria—
 Xen. Cyr.

HERALD.

For joy like this, death were a cheap exchange.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Strong thy affection to thy native soil.

HERALD.

So strong, the tear of joy starts from my eye.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What, hath this sweet infection reach'd e'en you?

HERALD.

Beyond the pow'r of language have I felt it.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The fond desire of those, whose equal love—

HERALD.

This of the army say'st thou, whose warm love
Streams to this land? is this thy fond desire?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Such, that I oft' have breath'd the secret sigh.

HERALD.

Whence did the army cause this anxious sadness?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Silence I long have held a healing balm.

HERALD.

The princes absent, had'st thou whom to fear?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

To use thy words, death were a wish'd exchange.

HERALD.

Well is the conflict ended. In the tide
Of so long time, if 'midst the easy flow
Of wish'd events some tyrannous blast assail us,
What marvel? who, save the blest Gods, can claim
Through life's whole course an unmix'd happiness?
Should I relate our toils, our wretched plight,
Wedg'd in our narrow ill-provided cabins,

Each irksome hour was loaded with fatigues.
Yet these were slight essays to those worse hardships

We suffer'd on the shore : our lodging near
The walls of the enemy, the dews of heaven
Fell on us from above, the damps beneath
From the moist marsh annoy'd us, shrouded ill
In shaggy cov'rings. Or should one relate
The winter's keen blasts, which from Ida's snows
Breathe froe, that pierc'd through all their plumes
the birds

Shiver and die ; or th' extreme heat that scalds,
When in his mid-day caves the sea reclines,
And not a breeze disturbs his calm repose.
But why lament these sufferings ? they are past ;
Past to the dead indeed ; they lie, no more
Anxious to rise. What then avails to count
Those, whom the wasteful war hath swept away,
And with their loss afflict the living ? rather
Bid we farewell to misery : in our scale,
Who haply of the Grecian host remain,
The good preponderates, and in counterpoise
Our loss is light ; and, after all our toils
By sea and land, before yon golden sun
It is our glorious privilege to boast,
" At length from vanquish'd Troy our warlike
troops
Have to the Gods of Greece brought home these
spoils,
And in their Temples, to record our conquests,
Fix'd these proud trophies." Those, that hear this
boast,
It well becomes to gratulate the state,

And the brave chiefs ; revering Jove's high pow'r
 That grac'd our conquering arms. Thou hast my
 message.

CHORUS.

Thy words convince me ; all my doubts are vanish'd :
 But scrupulous inquiry grows with age.
 On Clytemnestra and her house this charge,
 Blessing e'en me with the rich joy, devolves.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Long since my voice rais'd high each note of joy,
 When through the night the streaming blaze first
 came,

And told us Troy was taken : not unblam'd
 That, as a woman lightly credulous,
 I let a mountain fire transport my soul
 With the fond hope that Ilion's haughty tow'rs
 Were humbled in the dust. At this rebuke
 Though somewhat shaken, yet I sacrific'd ;
 And, as weak women wont, one voice of joy
 Awoke another, till the city rang
 Through all its streets ; and at the hallow'd shrines
 Each rais'd the pious strains of gratitude,
 And fann'd the altars' incense-breathing flame.
 But it is needless to detain thee longer,
 Soon from the king's own lips shal. I learn all.
 How best I may receive my honour'd lord,
 And grace his wish'd return, now claims my speel.
 Can heaven's fair beam shew a fond wife a sight
 More grateful than her husband from his wars
 Return'd with glory, when she opes the gate,
 And springs to welcome him ? tell my lord this,
 That he may hasten his desir'd return :
 And tell him he will find his faithful wife.

Such as he left her, a domestic creature
 To him all fondness, to his enemies
 Irreconcileable ; and tell him too
 That ten long years have not effac'd the seal
 Of Constancy ; that never knew I pleasure
 In the blamed converse of another man,
 More than the virgin metal in the mines
 Knows an adulterate and debasing mixture.

HERALD.

This high boast, lady, sanctified by truth,
 Is not unseemly in thy princely rank.

HERALD, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

This, for thy information, hath she spoken
 With dignity and truth. Now tell me, herald,
 Of Sparta's king wish I to question thee,
 The pride of Greece : returns he safe with you ?

HERALD.

Never can I esteem a falsehood honest,
 Though my friends long enjoy the sweet delusion.

CHORUS.

What then if thou relate an honest truth ?
 From this distinction the conjecture's easy.

HERALD.

Him from the Grecian fleet our eyes have lost,
 The hero and his ship. This is the truth.

CHORUS.

Chanc'd this, when in your sight he weigh'd from
 Troy ;

Or in a storm, that rent him from the fleet ?

HERALD.

Rightly is thy conjecture aim'd, in brief
Touching the long recital of our loss.

CHORUS.

How deem'd the other mariners of this ;
That the ship perish'd, or rode out the storm ?

HERALD.

Who, save yon' sun the regent of the earth,
Can give a clear and certain information ?

CHORUS.

How said'st thou then a storm, not without loss,
Wing'd with heaven's fury, tost the shatter'd fleet.

HERALD.

It is not meet, with inauspicious tongue*
Spreading ill-tidings, to profane a day
Sacred to festal joy : the Gods require
Their pure rites undisturbed. When with a brow
Witness of woe, the messenger relates
Unwelcome news, defeats, and slaughter'd armies,
The wound with general grief affects the state ;
And with particular and private sorrow
Full many a house, for many that have fall'n
Victims to Mars, who to his bloody car
Delights to yoke his terrors, sword and spear.
A pæan to the Furies would become
The bearer of such pond'rous heap of ills.
My tidings are of conquest and success
Diffusing joy : with these glad sounds how mix

* Ancient superstition required that the festal days, instituted to the honour of the gods for any success, should not be contaminated with any inauspicious word, much less with the relation of any unfortunate event: Æschylus here assigns the reason.

Distress, and speak of storms, and angry gods?—
The pow'rs, before most hostile, now conspir'd,
Fire and the sea, in ruin reconcil'd :
And in a night of tempest wild from Thrace
In all their fury rush'd the howling winds ;
Tost by the forceful blasts ship against ship
In hideous conflict dash'd, or disappear'd
Driv'n at the boist'rous whirlwind's dreadful will.
But when the sun's fair light return'd, we see
Bodies of Grecians, and the wreck of ships
Float on the chaf'd foam of th' Ægean sea.
Us and our ship some God, the pow'r of man
Were all too weak, holding the helm preserv'd
Unhurt, or interceding for our safety ;
And Fortune the deliverer steer'd our course
To shun the waves, that near the harbour's mouth
Boil high, or break upon the rocky shore.
Escap'd th' ingulfing sea, yet scarce secure
Of our escape, through the fair day we view
With sighs the recent sufferings of the host,
Cov'ring the sea with wrecks. If any breathe
This vital air, they deem us lost, as we
Think the same ruin theirs. Fair fall th' event!
But first and chief expect the Spartan king
T' arrive : if yet one ray of yon' bright sun
Beholds him living, through the care of Jove,
Who wills not to destroy that royal race,
Well may we hope to joy in his return.
Having heard this, know thou hast heard the truth.

CHORUS.

STROPHE 1.

Is there to names a charm profound
 Expressive of their fates assign'd,
Mysterious potency of sound,
 And truth in wond'rous accord join'd ?
 Why else this fatal name,
 That Helen and destruction are the same* ?
 Affianc'd in contention, led,
 The spear her dow'ry, to the bridal bed ;
 With desolation in her train,
 Fatal to martial hosts, to rampir'd tow'rs,
 From the rich fragrance of her gorgeous bow'rs,
 Descending to the main,
 She hastes to spread her flying sails,
 And calls the earth-born zephyr's gales.
 Whilst heroes, breathing vengeance, snatch their
 shields,
 And trace her light oars o'er the pathless waves,
 To the thick shades fresh waving o'er those fields,
 Which Simois with his silver windings laves.

ANTISTROPHE 1.

To Troy the shining mischief came,
 Before her young-ey'd pleasures play ;
 But in the rear with stedfast aim
 Grim visag'd vengeance marks his prey,

* Helena, in allusion to her name, is here called Helenas, Helandros, Heleptolis, the destroyer of ships, the destroyer of men, the destroyer of cities.

Waiting the dreadful hour
 The terrors of offended heaven to pour
 On those that dar'd, an impious train,
 The rights of hospitable Jove profane ;
 Nor rever'd that sacred song,
 Whose melting trains the bride's approach de-
 clare,
 As Hymen wakes the rapture-breathing air,
 Far other notes belong,
 The voice of mirth now heard no more,
 To Priam's state : its ruins o'er
 Wailing instead, distress, and loud lament ;
 Long sorrows sprung from that unholy bed,
 And many a curse in heart-felt anguish sent
 On its woe-wedded Paris' hated head.

STROPHE 2.

The woodman, from his thirsty lair,
 Reft of his dam, a lion bore ;
 Foster'd his future foe with care
 To mischiefs he must soon deplore :
 Gentle and tame, whilst young,
 Harmless he frisk'd the fondling babes among ;
 Oft in the father's bosom lay,
 Oft' lick'd his feeding hand in fawning play :
 Till, conscious of his firmer age,
 His lion-race the lordly savage shows ;
 No more his youth-protecting cottage knows,
 But with insatiate rage
 Flies on the flocks, a baleful guest,
 And riots in th' unbidden feast :
 Whilst through his mangled folds the hapless
 swain

With horror sees th' unbounded carnage
spread ;
And learns too late from th' infernal reign
A priest of Ate in his house was bred.

ANTISTROPHE 2.

To Ilion's tow'rs in wanton state
With speed she wings her easy way ;
Soft gales obedient round her wait,
And pant on the delighted sea.
Attendant on her side
The richest ornaments of splendid pride :
The darts, whose golden points inspire,
Shot from her eyes, the flames of soft desire ;
The youthful bloom of rosy love,
That fills with ecstasy the willing soul ;
With duteous zeal obey her sweet control.
But, such the doom of Jove,
Vindictive round her nuptial bed,
With threat'ning mien and footstep dread,
Rushes, to Priam and his state severe,
To rend the bleeding heart his stern delight,
And from the bridal eye to force the tear,
Erinnys, rising from the realms of night.

EPODE.

From ev'ry mouth we oft' have heard
This saying, for its age rever'd ;
“ With joy we see our offspring rise,
And happy, who not childless dies :
But fortune, when her flow'rets blow,
Oft' bears the bitter fruit of woe.”
Though these saws are as truths allow'd,
Thus I dare differ from the crowd,

"One base deed, with prolific pow'r,
Like its curst stock engenders more :
But to the just, with blooming grace
Still flourishes, a beauteous race."

The old injustice joys to breed
Her young, instinct with villainous deed ;
The young her destin'd hour will find
To rush in mischief on mankind :
She too in Ate's murky cell,
Brings forth the hideous child of hell,
A burden to th' offended sky,
The pow'r of bold impiety.

But Justice bids her ray divine
E'en on the low-roof'd cottage shine ;
And beams her glories on the life,
That knows not fraud, nor ruffian strife.
The gorgeous glare of gold, obtain'd
By foul polluted hands, disdain'd
She leaves, and with averted eyes
To humbler, holier mansions flies ;
And looking through the times to come
Assigns each deed its righteous doom.

CHORUS, AGAMEMNON.

CHORUS.

My royal lord, by whose victorious hand
The tow'rs of Troy are fall'n, illustrious son
Of Atreus, with what words, what reverence
Shall I address thee, not t' o'erleap the bounds
Of modest duty, nor to sink beneath

An honourable welcome ? some there are,
 That form themselves to seem, more than to be,
 Transgressing honesty : to him that feels
 Misfortune's rugged hand, full many a tongue
 Shall drop condolence, though th' unfeeling heart
 Knows not the touch of sorrow ; these again
 In fortune's summer gale with the like art
 Shall dress in forc'd smiles th' unwilling face :
 But him the penetrating eye soon marks,
 That in the seemly garb of honest zeal
 Attempts to clothe his meagre blandishments.
 When first in Helen's cause my royal lord
 Levied his host, let me not hide the truth,
 Notes, other than of music, echoed wide
 In loud complaints from such as deem'd him rash,
 And void of reason, by constraint to plant
 In breasts averse the martial soul, that glows
 Despising death. But now their eager zeal
 Streams friendly to those chiefs, whose prosp'rrous
 valour
 Is crown'd with conquest. Soon then shalt thou
 learn,
 As each supports the state, or strives to rend it
 With faction, who reveres thy dignity.

AGAMEMNON.

To Argos first, and to my country gods,
 I bow with reverence, by whose holy guidance
 On Troy's proud towers I pour'd their righteous
 vengeance,
 And now revisit safe my native soil.
 No loud-tongued pleader heard, they judg'd the
 cause,

And in the bloody urn*, without one vote
 Dissentient, cast the lots that fix'd the fate
 Of Ilion and its sons : the other vase
 Left empty, save of widow'd hope. The smoke,
 Rolling in dusky wreaths, shows that the town
 Is fallen ; the fiery storm yet lives, and high
 The dying ashes toss rich clouds of wealth
 Consum'd. For this behoves us to the gods
 Render our grateful thanks, and that they spread
 The net of fate sweeping with angry ruin.
 In beauty's cause the Argive monster rear'd
 Its bulk enormous, to th' affrighted town
 Portending devastation ; in its womb
 Hiding embattled hosts, rush'd furious forth,
 About the setting of the Pleiades,
 And, as a lion rav'ning for its prey,
 Ramp'd o'er their walls, and lapp'd the blood of
 kings.

This to the gods address'd, I turn me now
 Attentive to thy caution : I approve
 Thy just remark, and with my voice confirm it.
 Few have the fortitude of soul to honour
 A friend's success, without a touch of envy ;
 For that malignant passion to the heart
 Cleaves close, and with a double burden loads
 The man infected with it : first he feels
 In all their weight his own calamities,
 Then sighs to see the happiness of others.

* The English reader will find the whole process of the ancient courts of judicature, the loud-tongued pleaders, and the urns or vases of acquittal or condemnation, in the Furies : the vase, into which the shells of condemnation are put, is here finely called "the bloody urn."

This of my own experience have I learn'd ;
 And this I know, that many, who in public
 Have borne the semblance of my firmest friends,
 Are but the flatt'ring image of a shadow
 Reflected from a mirror : save Ulysses,
 Alone, who, though averse to join our arms,
 Yoked in his martial harness from my side
 Swerv'd not ; living or dead be this his praise.
 But what concerns our kingdom and the gods,
 Holding a general council of the state,
 We will consult ; that what is well may keep
 Its goodness permanent, and what requires
 Our healing hand, with mild severity
 May be corrected. But my royal roof
 Now will I visit, and before its hearths
 Offer libations to the gods, who sent me
 To this far distant war, and led me back.
 Firm stands the victory that attends our arms..

CLYTEMNESTRA, AGAMEMNON, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Friends, fellow-citizens, whose counsels guide
 The state of Argos, in your revernd presence
 A wife's fond love I blush not to disclose :
 Thus habit softens dread. From my full heart
 Will I recount my melancholy life
 Through the long stay of my lov'd lord at Troy :
 For a weak woman, in her husband's absence,
 Pensive to sit and lonely in her house,
 'Tis dismal, list'ning to each frightful tale :
 First one alarms her, then another comes

Charg'd with worse tidings. Had my poor lord here
 Suffer'd as many wounds as common fame
 Reported, like a net he had been pierc'd :
 Had he been slain oft as the loud-tongued rumour
 Was nois'd abroad, this triple-form'd Geryon*,
 A second of the name, whilst yet alive,
 For of the dead I speak not, well might boast
 To have receiv'd his triple mail, to die
 In each form singly. Such reports oppress'd me,
 Till life became distasteful, and my hands
 Were prompted oft to deeds of desperation.
 Nor is thy son Orestes, the dear tie
 That binds us each to th' other, present here
 To aid me, as he ought : nay, marvel not,
 The friendly Strophius with a right strong arm
 Protects him in Phocæa ; whilst his care
 Saw danger threat me in a double form,
 The loss of thee at Troy, the anarchy
 That might ensue, should madness drive the people
 To deeds of violence, as men are prompt
 Insultingly to trample on the fallen :
 Such care dwells not with fraud. At thy return
 The gushing fountains of my tears are dried,
 Save that my eyes are weak with midnight watch-
 ings,
 Straining, through tears, if haply they might see
 Thy signal fires, that claim'd my fix'd attention.
 If they were clos'd in sleep, a silly fly
 Would, with its slightest murmurings, make me start,

* Geryon was a king of Spain, killed by Hercules, fabled to have three bodies, because he had three armies commanded by his three sons.

And wake me to more fears. For thy dear sake
All this I suffer'd : but my jocund heart
 Forgets it all, whilst I behold my lord,
 My guardian, the strong anchor of my hope,
 The stately column that supports my house,
 Dear as an only child to a fond parent ;
 Welcome as land, which the lost mariner
 Beyond his hope desries ; welcome as day
 After a night of storms with fairer beams
 Returning ; welcome as the liquid lapse
 Of fountain to the thirsty traveller :
 So pleasant is it to escape the chain
 Of hard constraint. Such greeting I esteem
 Due to thy honour ; let it not offend,
 For I have suffer'd much. But, my lov'd lord,
 Leave now that car ; nor on the bare ground set
 That royal foot, beneath whose mighty tread
 Troy trembled. Haste, ye virgins, to whose care
 This pleasing office is entrusted, spread
 The streets with tapestry ; let the ground be cover'd
 With richest purple, leading to the palace ;
 That honour with just state may grace his entry,
 Though unexpected. My attentive care,
 Shall, if the gods permit, dispose the rest
 To welcome his high glories, as I ought.

AGAMEMNON.

Daughter of Leda, guardian of my house,
 Thy words are correspondent to my absence,
 Of no small length. With better grace my praise
 Would come from others : sooth me not with strains
 Of adulation, as a girl ; nor raise,
 As to some proud barbaric king, that loves
 Loud acclamations echoed from the mouths

Of prostrate worshippers, a clamorous welcome :
 Nor spread the streets with tapestry ; 'tis invidious ;
 These are the honours we should pay the gods.
 For mortal man to tread on ornaments
 Of rich embroid'ry——No : I dare not do it :
 Respect me as a man, not as a god.
 Why should my foot pollute these vests, that glow
 With various tinctur'd radiance ? My full fame
 Swells high without it ; and the temperate rule
 Of cool discretion is the choicest gift
 Of fav'ring Heaven. Happy the man, whose life
 Is spent in friendship's calm security.
 These sober joys be mine, I ask no more.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Do not thou thwart the purpose of my mind.

AGAMEMNON.

My mind, be well assur'd, shall not be tainted.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hast thou in fear made to the gods this vow ?

AGAMEMNON.

Free, from my soul in prudence have I said it.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Had Priam's arms prevail'd, how had he acted ?

AGAMEMNON.

On rich embroid'ry he had proudly trod.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Then dread not thou th' invidious tongues of men.

AGAMEMNON.

Yet has the popular voice much potency.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

But the unenvied is not of the happy.

AGAMEMNON.

All suits it thy soft sex to love contention.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

To yield sometimes adds honour to the mighty.

AGAMEMNON.

Art thou so earnest to obtain thy wish ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Let me prevail : indulge me with this conquest.

AGAMEMNON.

If such thy will, haste some one, from my feet
 Unloose these high-bound buskins, lest some god
 Look down indignant, if with them I press
 These vests sea-tinctur'd : shame it were to spoil
 With unclean tread their rich and costly texture.
 Of these enough.—This stranger, let her find
 A gentle treatment : from high heaven the God
 Looks with an eye of favour on the victor
 That bears his high state meekly ; for none wears
 Of his free choice the yoke of slavery.
 And she, of many treasures the prime flower
 Selected by the troops, has follow'd me.
 Well, since I yield me vanquish'd by thy voice,
 I go, treading on purple, to my house.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Does not the sea, and who shall drain it, yield
 Unfailing stores of these rich tints, that glow
 With purple radiance ! These this lordly house
 Commands, blest with abundance, but to want
 A stranger. I had vow'd his foot should tread
 On many a vestment, when the victims bled,
 The hallow'd pledge which this fond breast devis'd
 For his return. For whilst the vig'rous root
 Maintains its grasp, the stately licaud shall rise,
 And with its waving foliage screen the house
 From the fierce dog-star's fiery pestilence.

And on thy presence at thy household hearth,
 E'en the cold winter feels a genial warmth.
 But when the hot sun in the unripe grape
 Matures the wine, the husband's perfect virtues
 Spread a refreshing coolness. Thou, O Jove,
 Source of perfection, perfect all my vows,
 And with thy influence favour my intents !

CHORUS.

STROPHE 1.

What may this mean* ? along the skies
 Why do these dreadful portents roll ?
 Visions of terror, spare my aching eyes,
 Nor shake my sad presaging soul ?
 In accents dread, not tun'd in vain,
 Why bursts the free, unbidden strain ?
 These are no phantoms of the night,
 That vanish at the faithful light
 Of stedfast confidence. Thou sober pow'r,
 Whither, ah, whither art thou gone ?
 For since the long-pass'd hour,
 When first for Troy the naval band
 Unmoor'd their vessels from the strand,
 Thou hast not in my bosom fix'd thy throne.

ANTISTROPHE 1.

At length they come : these faithful eyes,
 See them return'd to Greece again :

* The Chorus, under the power of an immediate inspiration, in the sublimest style of poetry, is struck with visions of terror, that fill his heart with presages, and compel him to utter the prophetic strain.

Yet, while the sullen lyre in silence lies,
 Erinnys wakes the mournful strain :
 Her dreadful pow'rs possess my soul,
 And bid the untaught measures roll ;
 Swell in rude notes the dismal lay,
 And fright enchanting hope away :
 Whilst, ominous of ill, grim-visag'd care
 Incessant whirls my tortur'd heart.
 Vain be each anxious fear !
 Return, fair hope, thy seat resume,
 Dispel this melancholy gloom,
 And to my soul thy gladsome light impart !

STROPHE 2.

Ah me, what hope ! this mortal state
 Nothing but cruel change can know.
 Should cheerful health our vig'rous steps await,
 Enkindling all her roseate glow ;
 Disease creeps on with silent pace,
 And withers ev'ry blooming grace.
 Proud sails the bark ; the fresh gales breathe,
 And dash her on the rocks beneath.
 In the rich house her treasures plenty pours :
 Comes sloth, and from her well-pois'd sling
 Scatters the piled up stores.
 Yet disease makes not all her prey :
 Nor sinks the bark beneath the sea :
 And famine sees the heaven-sent harvest spring.

ANTISTROPHE 2.

But when forth-welling from the wound
 The purple-streaming blood shall fall,
 And the warm tide distain the reeking ground,
 Who shall the vanish'd life recall ?
 Nor verse, nor music's magic pow'r,

Nor the fam'd leech's boasted lore ;
 Not that his art restor'd the dead,
 Jove's thunder burst upon his head.—
But that the Fates forbid, and chain my tongue,
 My heart, at inspiration's call,
 Would the rapt strain prolong :
 Now all is dark ; it raves in vain,
 And, as it pants with trembling pain,
Desponding feels its fiery transports fall.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CASSANDRA, CHORUS:

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou, too, Cassandra, enter ; since high Jove,
 Gracious to thee, hath plac'd thee in this house*,
 With many slaves to share the common rites,
 And deck the altar of the fav'ring God.
 Come from that chariot, and let temperance rule
 Thy lofty spirit : e'en Alcmena's son,
 Sold as a slave, submitted to the yoke
 Perforce : and if necessity's hard hand
 Hath sunk thee to this fortune, our high rank,
 With greatness long acquainted, knows to use
 Its pow'r with gentleness : the low-born wretch,

* Clytemnestra tells Cassandra that her office should be to stand at the altar of Jupiter ; which was the most honourable department that could be given to captives of rank ; the Phœnissæ of Euripides were in this manner devoted to the Pythian Apollo ; and Manto, the celebrated daughter of Tiresias, was sent to Delphos by Alemæon, when he took Thebes : Jupiter, therefore, was gracious to Cassandra, by thus alleviating her misfortunes.

That from his mean degree rises at once
 To unexpected riches, treats his slaves
 With barbarous and unbounded insolence.
 From us thou wilt receive a juster treatment.

CHORUS.

These are plain truths : since in the toils of fate
 Thou art inclos'd, submit, if thou canst brook
 Submission ; haply I advise in vain.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

If that her language, like the twittering swallow's*,
 Be not all barbarous and unknown, my words
 Within shall with persuasion move her mind.

CHORUS.

She speaks what best beseems thy present state ;
 Follow, submit, and leave that lofty car.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I have not leisure here before the gates
 T' attend on her ; for at the inmost altar,
 Blazing with sacred fires, the victims stand
 Devoted to the gods for his return
 So much beyond our hopes. If to comply
 Thou form thy mind, delay not : if thy tongue
 Knows not to sound our language, let thy signs
 Supply the place of words, speak with thy hand.

CHORUS.

Of foreign birth, she understands us not ;
 But, as new taken, struggles in the net.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis frenzy this, the impulse of a mind

* Mr. Heath well observes, that the ancient Grecians called all nations, that spoke not "the sweet helladic tongue," swallows. The last line of this speech is another instance of the double sense, where more is meant than meets the ear.

Disorder'd ; from a city lately taken
 She comes, and know's not how to bear the curb,
 Till she has spent her rage in bloody foam.
 But I no more waste words to be disdain'd.

CHORUS.

My words, for much I pity her, shall bear
 No mark of anger. Go, unhappy fair one,
 Forsake thy chariot, unreluctant learn
 To bear this new yoke of necessity.

CASSANDRA.

Woe, woe ! Oh earth, Apollo, O Apollo !

CHORUS.

Why with that voice of woe invoke Apollo ?
 Ill do these notes of grief accord with him*.

CASSANDRA.

Woe, woe ! O earth ! Apollo, O Apollo !

CHORUS.

Again her inauspicious voice invokes
 The God, whose ears are not attun'd to woe,

CASSANDRA.

Apollo, O Apollo, fatal leader,
 Yet once more, God, thou leadest me to ruin !

CHORUS.

She seems prophetic of her own misfortunes,
 Retaining, through a slave, the divine spirit†.

CASSANDRA.

Apollo, O Apollo, fatal leader,
 Ah, whither hast thou led me ? to what house ?

* Strains of mourning, were proper only to the infernal gods.

† The free spirit of Greece breathes in this; it thought that the day, which saw a man a slave, took away half his virtues.

CHORUS.

Is that unknown ? let me deelare it then :
This is the royal mansion of th' Atridæ.

CASSANDRA.

It is a mansion hated by the gods,
Conscious to many a foul and horrid deed ;
A slaughter'd house, that reeks with human gore.

CHORUS.

This stranger seems, like the nice-seented hound,
Quick in the trace of blood, whieh she will find.

CASSANDRA.

These are eonvineing proofs. Look there, look
there,
Whilst pity drops a tear, the children butcher'd*,
The father feasting on their roasted flesh !

CHORUS.

Thy fame, prophetie virgin, we have heard ;
We know thy skill ; but wish no prophets now.

CASSANDRA.

Ye pow'rs of heaven, what does she now design ?
What new and dreadful deed of woe is this ?
What dreadful ill designs she in the house,
Intolerable, irreparable mischief,
Whilst far she sends the succouring pow'r away ?

CHORUS.

These prophecies surpass my apprehension :
The first I knew, they echo through the eity.

CASSANDRA.

Ah daring wretch, dost thou achieve this deed,
Thus in the bath the partner of thy bed

* Oracular as the words of Cassandra are, they sufficiently for the present purpose express the feast of Thyestes.

Refreshing? how shall I relate th' event?
 Yet speedy shall it be. E'en now advanc'd
 Hand above hand extended threatens high.

CHORUS.

I comprehend her not; her words are dark,
 Perplexing me like abstruse oracles.

CASSANDRA.

Ha! what is this, that I see here before me?
 Is it the net of hell? or rather her's,
 Who shares the bed, and plans the murderous deed.
 Let discord, whose insatiable rage
 Pursues this race, howl through the royal rooms
 Against the victim destin'd to destruction.

CHORUS.

What Fury dost thou call within this house
 To hold her orgies? the dread invocation
 Appals me; to my heart the purple drops
 Flow black; a deathlike mist covers my eyes,
 With expectation of some sudden ruin.

CASSANDRA.

See, see there: from the heifer keep the bull!—
 O'er his black brows she throws th' entangling vest,
 And smites him with her huge two-handed engine.
 He falls, amidst the cleansing laver falls:
 I tell thee of the bath, the treach'rous bath.

CHORUS.

T' unfold the obscure oracles of heaven
 Is not my boast; beneath the shadowing veil
 Misfortune lies: when did th' inquirer learn
 From the dark sentence an event of joy?
 From time's first records the diviner's voice
 Gives the sad heart a sense of misery.

CASSANDRA.

Ah me unhappy? wretched, wretched fate!
For my own sufferings join'd call forth these wailings.

Why hast thou brought me hither? wretched me?
Is it for this, that I may die with him?

CHORUS.

This is the frenzy of a mind possess'd
With wildest ravings. Thy own woes thou wailest
In mournful melody; like the sweet bird,
That darkling pours her never-ceasing plaint;
And for her Itys, her lost Itys, wastcs
In sweetest woe her melancholy lific.

CASSANDRA.

Ah me! the fortune of the nightingale
Is to be envied: on her light-pois'd plumes
She wings at will her easy way, nor knows
The anguish of a tear, whilst o'er my head
Th' impending sword threatens the fatal wound.

CHORUS.

Whence is this violent, this wild presage
Of ill? thy fears are vain; yet with a voice
That terrifies, though sweet, aloud thou speakest
Thy sorrows. Whence hast thou deriv'd these
omens,
Thus deeply mark'd with characters of death?

CASSANDRA.

Alas the bed, the bridal bed of Paris,
Destructive to his friends! paternal strcam,
Scamanler, on thy banks with careless steps
My childhood stray'd: but now methinks I go,
Alas, how soon! to prophesy around
Cocytus, and the banks of Acheron!

CHORUS.

Perspicuous this, and clear! the new-born babe
 Might comprehend it: but thy piercing griefs,
 Bewailing thus the miseries of thy fate,
 Strike deep; they wound me to my very soul.

CASSANDRA.

Ah my poor country, my poor bleeding country,
 Fall'n, fall'n for ever! and you, sacred altars,
 That blaz'd before my father's tow'red palace,
 Not all your victims could avert your doom!
 And on the earth soon shall my warm blood flow.

CHORUS.

This is consistent with thy former ravings.
 Or does some God indeed incumbent press
 Thy soul, and modulate thy voice to utter
 These lamentable notes of woe and death?
 What the event shall be, exceeds my knowledge.

CASSANDRA.

The oracle no more shall shroud its visage
 Beneath a veil, as a new bride that blushes
 To meet the gazing eye; but like the sun,
 When with his orient ray he gilds the east,
 Shall burst upon you in a flood of light,
 Disclosing deeds of deeper dread. Away,
 Ye mystic coverings! and you reverend men,
 Bear witness to me, that with steady step
 I trace foul deeds that smell above the earth.
 For never shall that band, whose yelling notes
 In dismal accord pierce th' affrighted ear,
 Forsake this house. The genius of the feast,
 Drunk with the blood of men, and fir'd from thence
 To bolder daring, ranges through the rooms
 Link'd with his kindred Furies: these possess

The mansion, and in horrid measures chaunt
 The first base deed *; recording with abhorrence
 Th' adulterous lust, that stain'd a brother's bed.
 What, like a skilful archer, have I lodg'd
 My arrow in the mark? no trifling this,
 T' alarm you with false sounds. But swear to me,
 In solemn attestation, that I know,
 And speak the old offences of this house.

CHORUS.

In such a rooted ill what healing pow'r
 Besides there in an oath? but much I marvel
 That thou, the native of a foreign realm,
 Of foreign tongue, canst speak our language freely,
 As Greece had been thy constant residence.

CASSANDRA.

Apollo grac'd me with this skill. At first
 The curb of modesty was on my tongue.

CHORUS.

Did the God feel the force of young desire?
 In each gay breast ease fans the wanton flame.

CASSANDRA.

With all the fervour of impatient love
 He strove to gratify my utmost wish.

CHORUS.

And didst thou listen to his tempting lures?

CASSANDRA.

First I assented, then deceiv'd the God.

CHORUS.

Wast thou then fraught with these prophetic arts?

CASSANDRA.

E'en then I told my country all its woes.

* The adultery of Thyestes with his brother's wife, the fatal cause of all the subsequent evils.

CHORUS.

The anger of the God fell heavy on thee ?

CASSANDRA.

My voice, for this offence, lost all persuasion.

CHORUS.

To us it seems a voice of truth divine.

CASSANDRA.

Woe, woe is me ! again the furious pow'r
 Swells in my lab'ring breast ; again commands
 My bursting voice ; and what I speak is Fate.—
 Look, look, behold those children.—There they sit ;
 Such are the forms, that in the troubled night
 Distract our sleep.—By a friend's hands they died :
 Are these the ties of blood ?—See, in their hands
 Their mangled limbs, horrid repast, they bear :
 Th' invited father shares th' accursed feast.

For this the slaggard savage, that at ease
 Rolls on his bed, nor rouses from his lair,
 'Gainst my returning lord, for I must wear
 The yoke of slavery, plans the dark design
 Of death. Ah me ! the chieftain of the fleet,
 The vanquisher of Troy, but little knows
 What the smooth tongue of mischief, filed to words
 Of glozing courtesy, with Fate her friend,
 Like Atc ranging in the dark, can do . . .
 Calmly : such deeds a woman dares : she dares
 Murder a man. What shall I call this mischief?
 An Amphisbæna ? or a Scylla rather,
 That in the vex'd rocks holds her residence,
 And meditates the mariner's destruction ?
 Mother of hell, 'midst friends enkindling discord
 And hate implacable ! with dreadful daring
 How did she shout, as if the battle swerv'd ?

Yet with feign'd joy she welcomes his return.—
 These words may want persuasion. What of that ?
 What must come, will come : and e'er long with
 grief

Thou shalt confess my prophecies are true.

CHORUS.

Thyestes' bloody feast oft have I heard of,
 Always with horror ; and I tremble now
 Hearing th' unaggravated truth. What else
 She utters, leads my wand'ring thoughts astray
 In wild uncertainty.

CASSANDRA.

Then mark me well,
 Thou shalt behold the death of Agamemnon.

CHORUS.

To hetter omens tune that voice unbless'd,
 Or in eternal silence be it sunk.

CASSANDRA.

This is an ill no medicine can heal.

CHORUS.

Not if it happens : but avert it, heav'n !

CASSANDRA.

To pray he thine ; the murd'rous deed is theirs.

CHORUS.

What man dares perpetrate this dreadful act ?

CASSANDRA.

How widely dost thou wander from my words ?

CHORUS.

I heard not whose bold hand should do the deed.

CASSANDRA.

Yet speak I well the language of your Greece:

CHORUS.

The gift of Phœbus this; no trivial grace.

CASSANDRA.

Ah, what a sudden flame comes rushing on me !
 I burn, I burn. Apollo, O Apollo !
 This lioness, that in a sensual sty
 Roll'd with the wolf, the generous lion absent,
 Will kill me. And the soreeress, as she brews
 Her philt'red cup, will drug it with my blood.
 She glories, as against her husband's life
 She whets the axe, her vengeanee falls on him
 For that he eame aeeompanied by me.—
 Why do I longer wear these useless honours,
 This laurel wand, and these prophetie wreaths ?
 Away ; before I die I east you from me ;
 Lie there, and perish ; I am rid of you ;
 Or deek the splendid ruin of some other.
 Apollo rends from me these saered vestments,
 Who saw me in his rieh habiliments
 Moek'd 'midst my friends, doubtless without a
 cause.

When in opprobrious terms they jeer'd my skill,
 And treated me as a poor vagrant wretch,
 That told events from door to door for bread,
 I bore it all : but now the prophet God,
 That with his own arts grae'd me, sinks me down
 To this low ruin. As my father fell
 Butcher'd e'en at the altar, like the vietim's
 My warm blood at the altar shall be shed :
 Nor shall we die unhonour'd by the gods.
 He comes, dreadful in punishment, the son
 Of this bad mother, by her death t' avenge
 His murder'd father : distant though he roams,
 An outeast and an exile, by his friends
 Fenc'd from these deeds of violence, he comes

In solemn vengeance for his father laid
 Thus low.—But why for foreign miseries
 Does the tear darken in my eye, that saw
 The fall of Ilium, and its haughty conqu'rors
 In righteous judgment thus receive their meed?
 But forward now; I go to close the scene,
 Nor shrink from death. I have a vow in heav'n:
 And further I adjure these gates of hell,
 Well may the blow be aim'd, that whilst my blood
 Flows in a copious stream, I may not feel
 The fierce, convulsive agonies of death;
 But gently sink, and close my eyes in peace.

CHORUS.

Unhappy, in thy knowledge most unhappy,
 Long have thy sorrows flow'd. But if indeed
 Thou dost foresee thy death, why, like the heifer
 Led by an heav'nly impulse do thy steps
 Advance thus boldly to the cruel altar?

CASSANDRA.

I could not by delay escape my fate.

CHORUS.

Yet is there some advantage in delay.

CASSANDRA.

The day is come: by flight I should gain little..

CHORUS.

Thy boldness adds to thy unhappiness.

CASSANDRA.

None of the happy shuns his destin'd end.

CHORUS.

True; but to die with glory crowns our praise..

CASSANDRA.

So died my father, so his noble sons.

CHORUS.

What may this mean? why backward dost thou start?

Do thy own thoughts with horror strike thy soul?

CASSANDRA.

The scent of blood and death breathes from this house.

CHORUS.

The victims now are bleeding at the altar.

CASSANDRA.

'Tis such a smell as issues from the tomb.

CHORUS.

This is no Syrian odour in the house.

CASSANDRA.

Such though it be, I enter, to bewail
My fate, and Agamemnon's. To have liv'd,
Let it suffice. And think not, gen'rous strangers,
Like the poor bird that flutter's o'er the bough,
Through fear I linger. But my dying words
You will remember, when her blood shall flow
For mine, woman's for woman's: and the man's,
For his that falls by his accursed wife.

CHORUS.

Thy fate, poor sufferer, fills my eyes with tears.

CASSANDRA.

Yet once more let me raise my mournful voice.
Thou Sun, whose rising beams shall bless no more
These closing eyes! you, whose vindictive rage
Hangs o'er my hated murderers, oh avenge me,
Though, a poor slave, I fall an easy prey!
This is the state of man: in prosperous fortune
A shadow, passing light, throws to the ground
Joy's baseless fabric: in adversity

Come malice with a sponge moisten'd in gall,
And wipes each beauteous character away :
More than the first this melts my soul to pity.

CHORUS.

By nature man is form'd with boundless wishes
For prosperous fortune ; and the great man's door
Stands ever open to that envied person,
On whom she smiles : but enter not with words,
Like this poor sufferer, of such dreadful import.
His arms the powers of Heaven have graced with
conquest ;

Troy's proud walls lie in dust ; and he returns
Crown'd by the gods with glory : but if now
His blood must for the blood there shed atone,
If he must die for those that died, too dearly
He buys his triumph. Who of mortal men
Hears this, and dares to think his state secure ?

AGAMEMNON.

Oh, I am wounded with a deadly blow. (*within*)

SEMI.

List, list. What cry is this of wounds and death ?

AGAMEMNON.

Wounded again ! Oh, basely, basely murder'd.

SEMI.

'Tis the king's cry ; the dreadful deed is doing.

What shall we do ? what measures shall we form ?

SEMI.

What if we spread th' alarm, and with our outcries
Call at the palace gates the citizens ?

SEMI.

Nay rather rush we in, and prove the deed,
Whilst the fresh blood is reeking on the sword.

SEMI.

I readily concur ; determine then ;
 For something must be done, and instantly.

SEMI.

That's evident. This bloody prelude threatens
 More deeds of violence and tyranny.

SEMI.

We linger : those that tread the paths of honour,
 Late though she meets them, sleep not in their
 task.

SEMI.

Perplexity and doubt distract my thoughts :
 Deeds of high import ask maturest counsel.

SEMI.

Such are my thoughts, since fruitless were th' at-
 tempt
 By all our pleas to raise the dead to life.

SEMI.

To save our wretched lives then shall we bow
 To these imperious lords, these stains of honour ?

SEMI.

That were a shame indeed : no : let us die ;
 Death is more welcome than such tyranny.

SEMI.

Shall we then take these outcries, which we heard,
 For proofs, and thence conclude the king is slain ?

SEMI.

We should be well assur'd e'er we pronounce :
 To know, and to conjecture, differ widely.

SEMI.

There's reason in thy words. But enter then,
 And see what fate attends the son of Atreus.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

To many a fair speech suited to the times
If my words now be found at variance,
I shall not blush. For, when the heart conceives
Thoughts of deep vengeance on a foe, what means
T' achieve the deed more certain, than to wear
The form of friendship, and with circling wiles
Inclose him in th' insuperable net ?
This was no hasty, rash-conceiv'd design ;
But form'd with deep, premeditated thought,
Incensed with wrongs ; and often have I stood,
T' assay the execution, where he fell ;
And plann'd it so, for I with pride avow it,
He had no power t' escape, or to resist,
Entangled in the gorgeous robe, that shone
Fatally rich. I struck him twice, and twice
He groan'd, then died. A third time as he lay
I gored him with a wound ; a grateful present
To the stern god, that in the realms below
Reigns o'er the dead : there let him take his scat.
He lay ; and spouting from his wounds a stream
Of blood, bedew'd me with these crimson drops.
I glory in them, like the genial earth,
When the warm showers of Heaven descend, and
wake
The flow'rets to unfold their vermicil leaves.
Come, then, ye reverend senators of Argos,
Joy with me, if your hearts be tun'd to joy ;
And such I wish them. Were it decent now

To pour libations o'er the dead, with justice
 It might be done ; for his injurious pride
 Fill'd for this house the cup of desolation,
 Fated himself to drain it to the dregs.

CHORUS.

We are astonish'd at thy daring words,
 Thus vaunting o'er the ruins of thy husband.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Me, like a witless woman, would'st thou fright ?
 I tell thee, my firm soul disdains to fear.
 Be thou disposed t' applaud, or censure me,
 I reck it not : there Agamemnon lies,
 My husband, slaughter'd by this hand : I dare
 Avow his death, and justify the deed.

CHORUS.

What poison hath the baleful-teeming earth,
 Or the chaf'd billows of the foamy sea,
 Giv'n thee for food, or mingled in thy cup,
 To work thee to this frenzy ? thy curs'd hand
 Hath struck, hath slain. For this thy country's
 wrath

Shall in just vengeance burst upon thy head,
 And with abhorrence drive thee from the city.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And dost thou now denounce upon my head
 Vengeance, and hate, and exile ? 'gainst this man
 Urging no charge ! yet he without remorse,
 As if a lamb that wanton'd in his pastures
 Were doom'd to bleed, could sacrifice his daughter,
 For whose dear sake I felt a mother's pains,
 T' appease the winds of Thrace. Should not thy
 voice

Adjudge this man to exile, in just vengeance
 For such unholy deeds? scarce hast thou heard
 What I have done, but sentence is pronounc'd,
 And that with rigour too. But mark me well,
 I boldly tell thee that I bear a soul
 Prepar'd for either fortune: if thy hand
 Be stronger, use thy pow'r: but if the gods
 Prosper my cause, be thou assur'd, old man,
 Thou shalt be taught a lesson of discretion.

CHORUS.

Aspiring are thy thoughts, and thy proud vaunts
 Swell with disdain; e'en yet thy madding mind
 Is drunk with slaughter; with a savage grace
 The thick blood stains thine eye. But soon thy
 friends
 Faithless shall shrink from thy unshelter'd side,
 And leave thee to just vengeance, blow for blow.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hear then this solemn oath: by that revenge,
 Which for my daughter I have greatly taken;
 By the dread pow'rs of Ate and Erinnys,
 To whom my hand devoted him a victim,
 Without a thought of fear I range these rooms,
 Whilst present to my aid Ægisthus stands,
 As he hath stood, guarding my social hearth:
 He is my shield, my strength, my confidence.
 Here lies my base betrayer, who at Troy
 Could revel in the arms of each Chryseis;
 He, and his captive minion; she that mark'd
 Portents and prodigies, and with ominous tongue
 Presag'd the Fates; a wanton harlotry,
 True to the rorer's benches: their just meed
 Have they receiv'd. See where he lies; and she,

That like the swan warbled her dying notes,
 His paranymp lies with him, to my bed
 Leaving the darling object of my wishes.

CHORUS.

No slow-consuming pains, to torture us
 Fix'd to the groaning couch, await us now ;
 But Fate comes rushing on, and brings the sleep
 That wakes no more. There lies the king, whose
 virtues

Were truly royal. In a woman's cause
 He suffer'd much ; and by a woman perish'd.
 Ah fatal Helen : in the fields of Troy
 How many has thy guilt, thy guilt alone,
 Stretch'd in the dust ? but now by murd'rous hands
 Hast thou sluic'd out this rich and noble blood,
 Whose foul stains never can be purg'd. This ruin
 Hath discord, raging in the house, effected.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Wish not for death ; nor bow beneath thy griefs ;
 Nor turn thy rage on Helen, as if she
 Had drench'd the fields with blood, as she alone
 Fatal to Greece had caus'd these dreadful ills.

CHORUS.

Tremendous fiend, that breathest through this house
 Thy baleful spirit, and with equal daring*
 Hast steepl'd these royal sisters to fierce deeds

* The Chorus had before compared together the deeds of these two daughters of Tyndarus: Helena had destroyed many in the fields of Troy, Clytemnestra one man, but one of such dignity, that he was equivalent to many; the comparison is here continued, that the baleful spirit which breathed through the house of Tantalus, had steeled these royal sisters to deeds of equal daring.—Heath.

That rend my soul, now, like the baleful raven,
 Incumbent o'er the body dost thou joy
 'T affright us with thy harsh and dissonant notes !

CLYTEMNESTRA.

There's sense in this : now hast thou touch'd the key,

Rousing the Fury that from sire to son
 Hath bade the stream of blood, first pour'd by her,
 Descend : one sanguine tide scarce roll'd away,
 Another flows in terrible succession.

CHORUS.

And dost thou glory in these deeds of death,
 This vengeance of the Fury ? thus to pride thee
 In ruin, and the havoc of thy house,
 Becomes thee ill. Ah ! 'tis a higher pow'r,
 That thus ordains ; we see the hand of Jove,
 Whose will directs the fate of mortal man.
 My king, my royal lord, what words can show
 My grief, my reverence for thy princely virtues !
 Art thou thus fall'n, caught in a cobweb snare,
 By impious murder breathing out thy life ?
 Art thou thus fall'n, ah the disloyal bed !
 Secretly slaughter'd by a treach'rous hand ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou say'st, and say'st aloud, I did this deed :
 Say not that I, that Agamemnon's wife,
 Did it : the Fury, fatal to this house,
 In vengeance for Thyestes' horrid feast,
 Assum'd this form, and with her ancient rage
 Hath for the children sacrific'd the man.

CHORUS.

That thou art guiltless of this blood, what proof,
 What witness ?—from the father, in his cause,

Rise an avenger? stain'd with the dark streams
 Of kindred blood fierce waves the bick'ring sword,
 And points the ruthless boy to deeds of horror.—
 My king, my royal lord, what words can show
 My grief, my reverence for thy princely virtues!
 Art thou thus fall'n, caught in a cobweb snare,
 By impious murder breathing out thy life?
 Art thou thus fall'n, ah the disloyal bed!
 Secretly slaughter'd by a treach'rous hand?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

No: of his death far otherwise I deem,
 Nothing disloyal. Nor with secret guile
 Wrought he his murd'rous mischiefs on this house,
 For my sweet flow'ret, opening from the stem,
 My Iphigenia, my lamented child,
 Whom he unjustly slew, he justly died.
 Nor let him glory in the shades below;
 For as he taught his sword to thirst for blood,
 So by the thirsty sword his blood was shed.

CHORUS.

Perplex'd and troubled in my anxious thought,
 Amidst the ruins of this house, despair
 Hangs heavy on me. Drop by drop no more
 Descends the show'r of blood; but the wild storm
 In one red torrent shakes the solid walls;
 Whilst vengeance, ranging through the deathful
 scene,
 For further mischief whets her fatal sword.

SEMI.

O earth, that I had rested in thy bosom,
 E'er I had seen him lodg'd with thee, and shrunk
 To the brief compass of a silver urn!
 Who shall attend the rites of sepulture?

Who shall lament him ? thou, whose hand hast shed
 Thy husband's blood, wilt thou dare raise the voice
 Of mourning o'er him ? thy unhallow'd hand
 Renders these honours, should they come from thee,
 Unweleome to his shade. What faithful tongue,
 Fond to recount his great and godlike acts,
 Shall steep in tears his funeral eulogy ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

This care concerns not thee : by us he fell,
 By us he died ; and we will bury him
 With no domestic grief. But Iphigenia,
 His daughter, as is meet, devout and blithe
 Shall meet him on the banks of that sad stream,
 The flood of sorrow, and with filial duty
 Hang fondling on her father's neck, and kiss him.

CHORUS.

Thus insult treads on insult. Of these things
 Hard is it to decide. Th' infected stain
 Communicates th' infection ; murder calls
 For blood ; and outrage, on th' injurious head,
 At Jove's appointed time, draws outrage down.
 Thus, by the laws of nature, son succeeds
 To sire ; and who shall drive him from the house ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

These are the oracles of truth. But hear me ;
 It likes me to the genius of the race
 Of Plisthenes* to swear that what is past,
 Though poor the satisfaction, bounds my wishes.
 Hither he comes no more : no, let him stain

* The relation of Plisthenes to the house of Pelops is not well made out. Hither he comes no more, means the genius of the race of Plisthenes.

Some other house with gore. For me, some poor,
 Some scanty pittance of the goods contents me,
 Well satisfied that from this house I've driven
 These frantic Furies red with kindred blood.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

ÆGISTHUS.

Hail to this joyful day, whose welcome light
 Brings vengeance ! now I know that the just gods
 Look from their skies, and punish impious mortals,
 Sceing this man roll'd in the blood-wove woof,
 The tissue of the Furies, grateful sight,
 And suffering for his father's fraudulent crimes.
 Atreus, his father, sovereign of this land,
 Brooking no rival in his pow'r, drove out
 My father and his brother, poor Thyestes,
 A wretched exile : from his country far
 He wander'd ; but at length return'd, and stood
 A suppliant before the household gods,
 Secure in their protection that his blood
 Should not distain the pavement. This man's father,
 The sacrilegious Atreus, with more show
 Of courtesy than friendship, spread the feast,
 Devoting, such the fair pretence, the day
 To hospitality and genial mirth :
 Then to my father in that feast serv'd up
 The flesh of his own sons : their hands and feet
 Hack'd off before, their undistinguish'd parts
 He eat, without suspicion eat, a food
 Destructive to the race. But when he knew
 Th' unhallow'd deed, he rais'd a mournful cry,

And starting up with horror spurn'd to the ground
 The barb'rous banquet, utt'ring many a curse
 Of deepest vengeance on the house of Pelops.

Thus perish all the race of Plisthenes !

And for this cause thou seest him fall'n, his death
 With justice I devis'd ; for me he chas'd,
 The thirteenth son, an infant in my cradle,
 With my unhappy father. Nurs'd abroad,
 Vengeance led back my steps, and taught my hand
 From far to reach him. All this plan of ruin
 Was mine, reckless of what ensues ; e'en death
 Were glorious, now he lies caught in my vengeance.

CHORUS.

T' imbitter ills with insult, this, Ægisthus,
 I praise not. Thou, of thine own free accord,
 Hast slain this man ; such is thy boast ; this plan
 Of ruin, which we mourn, is thine alone.
 But be thou well assur'd thou shalt not 'scape,
 When, rous'd to justice, the avenging people
 Shall hurl their stones with curses on thy head.

ÆGISTHUS.

From thee, who labourest at the lowest oar,
 This language, and to him that holds the helm !
 Thou shalt be taught, old man, what at thy age
 Is a hard lesson, prudence. Chains and hunger,
 Besides the load of age, have sovereign virtue
 To physic the proud heart. Behold this sight ;
 Does it not ope thine eycs ? rest quiet then ;
 Contend not with the strong ; therc's danger in it.

CHORUS.

And could thy softer sex, whilst the rough war
 Demands its chieftain, violate his bed,
 And on his first return contrive his death ?

ÆGISTHUS.

No more : this sounds th' alarm to rude complaints,
 The voice of Orpheus with its soothing notes
 Attracted e'en the savage ; whilst thy yells
 To rage inflame the gentle : but take heed ;
 Dungeons and chains may teach thee moderation.

CHORUS.

Shalt thou reign king in Argos ? thou, whose soul
 Plotted this murder ; whilst thy coward hand
 Shrunk back, nor dared to execute the deed ?

ÆGISTHUS.

Wiles and deceit are female qualities :
 The memory of my ancient enmity
 Had wak'd suspicion. Master of his treasures,
 Be it my next attempt to gain the people :
 Whome'er I find unwilling to submit,
 Him, like an high-fed and unruly horse
 Reluctant to the harness, rigour soon
 Shall tame : confinement, and her meagre comrade,
 Keen hunger, will abate his fiery mettle.

CHORUS.

Did not the baseness of thy coward soul
 Unman thee to this murder, that a woman,
 Shame to her country and her country's gods,
 Must dare the horrid deed ? but when Orestes,
 Where'er he breathes the vital air, returns,
 Good fortune be his guide, shall not his hand
 Take a bold vengeance in the death of both ?

ÆGISTHUS.

Such since thy thoughts and words, soon shalt thou
 feel—

CHORUS.

Help, ho ! soldiers and friends ; the danger's near ;

Help, ho ! advance in haste, with your drawn swords !

ÆGISTHUS.

My sword is drawn : Ægisthus dares to die.

CHORUS.

Prophetic be thy words ! we hail the omen.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Dearest of men, do not heap ills on ills ;
 I wish not to exasperate, but to heal
 Misfortunes past : enough is giv'n to vengeance ;
 Let no more blood be spilt. Go then, old men,
 Each to your homes ; go, whilst ye may, in peace.
 What hath been done the rigour of the times
 Compell'd, and hard necessity ; the weight
 Of these afflictions, grievous as they are,
 By too severe a doom falls on our heads.
 Disdain not to be taught, though by a woman.

ÆGISTHUS.

Ay ; but to hear this vain, tongue-doughty babbler,
 Lavish of speech that tempts to desperate deeds,
 It moves me from the firmness of my temper.

CHORUS.

An Argive scorns to fawn on guilty greatness.

ÆGISTHUS.

My vengeance shall o'ertake thee at the last.

CHORUS.

Not if just heaven shall guide Orestes here.

ÆGISTHUS.

An exile, I well know, feeds on vain hopes.

CHORUS.

Go on then, gorge with blood ; thou hast the means.

ÆGISTHUS.

This folly, be assur'd, shall cost thee dear.

CHORUS.

The craven, in her presence, rears his crest.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Slight men, regard them not ; but let us enter,
Assume our state, and order all things well.

THE
CHOEPHORÆ ;

TRANSLATED BY

R. POTTER.

VOL. L.

H

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

Orestes.

Pylades.

Electra.

Clytemnestra.

Ægisthus.

Servants.

Chorus of Trojan Dames.

THE
CHOEPHORÆ.

THE Chorus in the former play, with a dignity and firmness becoming senators of Argos, had expressed their abhorrence of the murder of Agamemnon even to the face of Clytemnestra and Ægisthus, and threatened them with the anger of the gods and the vengeance of Orestes: this is here executed.

The characters of Orestes and Electra are finely supported. A pious resentment of the murder of his father, a consciousness of his own high rank, and a just indignation at the injuries he had received from the murderers, a generous desire to deliver his country from the tyranny of these usurpers, and above all the express command of Apollo, with a promise of his protection if he obeyed, and a denunciation of the severest punishments should he dare to disobey, incited Orestes to this deed: he is accordingly drawn as a man of a brave and daring spirit, touched with the highest sense of honour, and the most religious reverence of the gods: in such a character there could be nothing savage and

ferocious; and we are pleased to find him deeply sensible of the horror of the deed which he was obliged to perpetrate, and averse to plunge his sword into the breast of his mother. "Electra's character," in the words of the critic, "is that of a fierce and determined, but withal of a generous and virtuous woman. Her motives to revenge were, principally, a strong sense of justice, and superior affection for a father; not a rooted, unnatural aversion to a mother. She acted, as appears, not from perturbation of a tumultuous revenge, but from a fixed abhorrence of wrong, and a virtuous sense of duty." Consistently with this character, when she had given Orestes a spirited account of their father's murder, which drew him to declare his resolution to revenge it, showing at the same time some sign of remorse, she adds a short relation of the barbarous indignities offered to the dead body; a deed of horror which, she knew, would shock his soul. She had seen her father murdered, his body mangled, and buried without its honours; her brother, whom she loved with the tenderest affection, deprived of his throne, and exiled from his country; her mother in the arms of Ægisthus abandoning herself to her loose and infamous pleasures; she was herself continually exposed to the insults and barbarous treatment of this ungentle mother; what wonder then that a spirit naturally lofty and sensible should catch fire at these injuries, contract a wolfish fierceness, as she expresses it, and urge her brother to sacrifice these proud oppressors to justice and revenge? But the poet, with great regard to decorum, removes her from the scene before the dread-

ful deed is to be committed; with regard to his management of the catastrophe, nothing could be more judicious. Orestes, who had rushed on Ægisthus with the fury of a tyger, in the presence of his mother feels himself under the restraint of filial reverence, and confesses his reluctance to shed her blood; till Pylades animates him with a sentence as solemn as the Delphic Oracle; which finely marks the fatal blow as an act of necessary justice, not of ruffian violence. Even the Chorus, who enter warmly into the interests of Electra and Orestes, and had fired him to revenge by every argument of duty, justice, law, and honour; who had wished to hear the dying groans of the guilty tyrants, and to echo them back in notes as dismal, after the deed is done, reassume the softer sentiments of humanity, and lament their fate. The remorse and madness of Orestes is touched in the finest manner. These indeed are but sketches, but they are the sketches of a great master: a succeeding poet had the skill to give them their finishing, and heightened them with the warmest glow of colouring. The spirit of Æschylus shines through this tragedy; but a certain softening of grief hangs over it, and gives it an air of solemn magnificence.

The scene of this tragedy, as of the former, is at Argos before the royal palace. Orestes, according to the custom of ancient times, offering his hair on the tomb of his father, sees a train of females advancing from the house, and *bringing libations to the tomb*; from whence the play receives its name. The action is afterwards removed to the area before the palace. This requires no change of scene.

THE

CHOEPHORÆ.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

ORESTES.

O THOU, that to the regions of the dead*
Bearest thy father's high behests, O hear,
Hear, Mercury, thy suppliant, protect,
And save me ; for I come, from exile come,

* The beginning of this play is lost ; but fortunately the sense remains entire. Orestes, returned from banishment, and advancing to the tomb of his father, first implores the protection of Mercury, as the conductor of the dead to the shades below, which was his known office ; thus Horace.

Tu pias lætis animas reponis
Sedibus.

Then addresses his father's manes, whilst he places on the tomb his hair before consecrated to the river Inachus ; and this in perfect conformity to ancient usage : thus Achilles at the funeral of Patroclus cuts off his hair, sacred to Sperchius : instances abound. As the Grecians wore their hair long, and dressed it with much elegance, we may suppose, that the depriving themselves of so considerable ornament was an indication of grief.—When Helena, at her return to Argos soon after the death of Clytemnestra, thought it necessary to present her

Revisiting my country!—thou, dread shade,
 At whose high tomb I bow, shade of my father,
 Hear me, O hear! to thee these crisped locks,
 Once sacred to th' nurture-giving stream
 Of Inachus, in th' anguish of my soul
 I now devote.—But what are these, this train
 Of females in the sable garb of wo,
 Decently habited? whence spring their sorrows?
 Does some new ruin lord it in the house?
 Or haply, if I deem aright, they bring
 Oblations to my father's shade, to sooth
 The mighty dead. It must be so; for, see,
 Electra is among them, my poor sister,
 Pre-eminent in grief.—Almighty Jove,
 O give me to revenge my father's death,
 And shield me with thy favour! Pylades,
 Stand we apart concealed, that I may learn
 What leads this train of suppliant females hither.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

This sadly-pensive train to lead,
 With hallow'd rites to sooth the dead,
 To bear these off'rings to his shrine,
 The melancholy task is mine.

hair at her sister's tomb, she takes care to cut it so as not to disfigure herself; on which Electra says,

O nature, in the bad how great an ill!
 But in the virtuous strong thy pow'r to save.
 See, she hath shorn the extremity of her locks,
 Anxious of beauty, the same woman still.

Eurip. Elect.

And, as from yon' proud walls I take my way,
 My cheeks, with many' a sounding blow
 Beat by these hands, in crimson glow,
 Whilst my poor heart to anguish sinks a prey :
 And the fair texture of this vest,
 That decent o'er my swelling bosom roll'd,
 My griefs through ev'ry waving fold
 Have rent, and bared my bleeding breast.

ANTISTROPHE I.

For in the still and midnight hour,
 When darkness aids his hideous pow'r,
 Affright, that breathes his vengeance deep,
 Haunts with wild dreams the troubled sleep,
 That freeze the blood, and raise the bristling hair :
 Grim spectre ! he with horrid tread
 Stalk'd around the curtain'd bed,
 And rais'd a yell that pierc'd the tortur'd ear.
 Aghast the heav'n-taught prophet stood ;
 The dead, he cries, the angry dead around
 These dreadful notes of vengeance sound,
 Dreadful to those that shed their blood.

STROPHE II.

With soul-subduing fear appall'd
 Me this unholy woman call'd,
 To bear these gifts, this train to lead,
 And soothe to peace the mighty dead.
 But will these gifts be grateful to his shade ?
 O earth, when once the gushing blood
 Hath on thy purple bosom flow'd,
 What grateful expiation shall be made ?
 Ill-fated house, thy master slain,
 How are thy glories vanish'd ! o'er thy walls
 A joyless, sunless darkness falls,
 And horror holds his hateful reign.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Round him the blaze of greatness shone;
 And dignity adorn'd his throne :
 The people bow'd before their lord,
 Awe-struck, and his high state ador'd.

Where now that reverend awe, that sacred dread
 Of majesty ? success, to thee,
 As to a God, men bend the knee.

But justice hastes t' avenge each impious deed ;
 Some in day's clear and open light,
 Some in the dusky evening's twilight shade,
 Or by delay more furious made,
 Some in the dreary gloom of night.

EPODE.

His blood that sunk upon the ground
 A stiffen'd mass of carnage lies,
 Aloud for vengeance on his murderers cries :
 Ate obeys the call ; but slow
 Delays, till dreary night inclose them round,
 Prepar'd to strike a deeper blow.
 Shall he, that foul with midnight rape
 Pollutes the nuptial bed, escape ?
 Murder and lust ! were all the streams, that wind
 Their mazy progress to the main,
 To cleanse this odious stain in one combin'd,
 The streams combin'd would flow in vain.
 Me, from my bleeding country torn,
 Condemn'd the servile yoke to bear,
 Bitter constraint and spirit-sinking fear
 Compel t' obey their proud commands ;
 Just or unjust, perforce they must be borne ;
 Captive, my life is in their hands :

Perforce my struggling soul conceals its hate ;
 My vest forbids the starting tear to flow ;
 Mourning the mighty chief's unhappy fate
 Silent I stand, and stiffen with my woe.

ELECTRA.

Ye captive females, to whose care this house
 Owes what it has of order, since with me
 You here are present on these suppliant rites
 Attendant, show, instruct me, as I pour
 These solemn off'rings on the tomb, what words
 Of gracious potency shall I pronounce ?
 Or how invoke my father ? shall I say
 "To her lov'd lord the loving wife hath sent
 These presents ?" shame forbids : nor hath my
 tongue
 Ought of address, whilst on my father's tomb
 I offer these atonements. Should I rather,
 As nature prompts, entreat him to return
 Like garlands to the senders, meet reward
 For their ill deeds ? or, with inglorious silence,
 For so he perish'd, on the thirsty earth
 Pour these libations, then retire, like one
 That in some worthless vessel throws away
 Something unclean, and casts the vessel with it,
 Nor backwards turns her eyes. Instruct me, friends,
 Advise me, for alike we hate this house ;
 Be open then : here you have none to fear.
 The free escapes not fate, more than the wretch
 That trembles at his proud lord's tyrannous hand.
 If thou hast ought of counsel, give it me.

CHORUS.

Since, as some hallow'd shrine, thy father's tomb
 I reverence, at thy bidding I will speak.

ELECTRA.

I charge thee, by that reverence, freely speak.

CHORUS.

With these libations pour thy ardent vows
For blessings on the head of all his friends,

ELECTRA.

Whom by that honour'd title shall I name ?

CHORUS.

Thyself the first, and all that hate Ægisthus.

ELECTRA.

For thee and me then shall I pour these vows ?

CHORUS.

To learn, and weigh this well, be thy concern,

ELECTRA.

Whom to this friendly number shall I add ?

CHORUS.

Though distant far, remember poor Orestes.

ELECTRA.

That's well : I learn no little wisdom from thee.

CHORUS.

Remember next the authors of his death.

ELECTRA.

What should I say ? instruct my lack of knowledge.

CHORUS.

Pray that some God, or man, may come to them.

ELECTRA.

With what intent ? to judge, or to avenge ?

CHORUS.

Speak plainly, to repay them death for death.

ELECTRA.

And may this be with reverence to the gods ?

CHORUS.

What hinders to requite a foe with ill ?

ELECTRA, *at the tomb.*

O thou, that to the realms beneath the earth
Guimest the dead, be present, Mercury,
And tell me that the powers, whose solemn sway
Extends o'er those dark regions, hear my vows ;
Tell me that o'er my father's house they roll
Their awful eyes, and o'er this earth, that bears
And fosters all, rich in their various fruits.
And thee, my father, pouring from this vase
Libations to thy shade, on thee I call,
O pity me, pity my dear Orestes,
That in this seat of kings our hands may hold
The golden reigns of power : for now oppress'd,
And harass'd by a mother's cruel hand,
Who for Ægisthus, that contriv'd thy death,
Exchang'd her royal lord, he wanders far,
And I am treated as a slave : Orestes
From his possessions exil'd, they with pride
Wantonly revel in the wealth thy toils
Procur'd : O grant Orestes may return,
And fortune be his guide ! Hear me, my father,
And grant me, more than e'er my mother knew,
The grace and blush of unstain'd modesty,
And a more holy hand ! For us these vows ;
But on our foes may thy avenger rise
Demanding blood for blood. These vows I breathe
In dreadful imprecations on their heads.
Be thou to us, my father, with the gods,
This earth, and powerful justice, be to us,
That breathe this vital air, a guide to good.

With these libations such the vows I offer.
Now let your sorrows flow ; attune the Pæan,
And sooth his shade with solemn harmony.

CHORUS.

Swell the warbling voice of wo,
Loudly let the measures flow ;
And ever and anon the sorrowing tear
Trickling dew the hallow'd ground,
T' avert the ills we fear ;
Whilst on this sepulchral mound
Her pious hands the pure libation shed,
T' atone the mighty dead.
Hear me, O hear me, awful lord,
Through the dreary gloom ador'd !
Ha ! Who is this* ? See, sisters, see,
Mark with what force he shakes his angry lance :
Comes he this ruin'd house to free ?
So does some Thracian chief advance ;
So Mars, when rous'd with war's alarms,
Radiant all his clashing arms,
Rears high his flaming falchion to the blow,
And thunders on the foe.

ELECTRA.

'Tis finish'd ; these libations to my fathcr
The earth has drunk.—Thou awful power, that
holdest

* The Chorus begins this Pæan to the dead with lamentations for their lost lord ; they are proceeding to invoke his aid ; but this is scarce mentioned, when they break off with outcries, the prophetic狂熱seizes them, and impresses on the imagination the youthful hero in all his radiant arms coming to avenge the death of his father. This is the sublime and daring spirit which distinguishes Æschylus from all other writers.

'Twixt this ethereal sky and the dark realms
 Beneath dread intercourse, what may this mean ?
 'Tis all amazement. Share this wonder with me.

CHORUS.

Say what : my throbbing heart has caught th' alarm.

ELECTRA.

Plac'd on the tomb behold these crисped locks.

CHORUS.

Shorn from a man, or some high-bosom'd dame ?

ELECTRA.

'Tis no hard task to form a strong conjecture.

CHORUS.

Young though thou art, inform my riper age.

ELECTRA.

None here, myself excepted, could devote
 His locks, the mournful off'ring ill becomes
 Our enemies. Then the colour ; mark it well ;
 'Tis the same shade.

CHORUS.

With whose ? I burn to know.

ELECTRA.

With mine : compare them : are they not much
 like ?

CHORUS.

Are they a secret off'ring from Orestes ?

ELECTRA.

Mark : they are very like his clust'ring locks.

CHORUS.

I marvel how he dared to venture hither.

ELECTRA.

Perchance he sent this honour to his father.

CHORUS.

Nor that less cause of sorrow, if his foot

Must never press his native soil again.

ELECTRA.

A flood of grief o'erwhelms me, and my heart
Is pierc'd with anguish ; from my eyes that view
These locks, fast fall the ceaseless-streaming tears,
Like wint'ry showers. To whom besides, that here-
Inhabits, could I think these locks belong ?
Could she, who slew him, offer on his tomb
Her hair ? Alas, her thoughts are impious all,
Such as a daughter dares not name. I deem,
With reason then I deem they graced the head
Of my Orestes, dearest of mankind :
Why should not I indulge the flatt'ring hope ?
Ah, had they but a voice, could they but speak,
That I no more might fluctuate with these doubts
Perplex'd and troubled ; could they plainly tell me
If they were shorn from a foe's hated head,
Or fondly mix their kindred griefs with mine,
A grace and honour to my father's tomb !
But to the gods, that know what furious storms
Burst o'er me, like a shipwreck'd mariner,
I make appeal : if haply ought of safety
Remains, from this small root the vig'rous trunk
May spread its shelt'ring branches.—Further mark
Th' impression of these feet ; they show that two
Trod here ; himself perchance and his attendant ;
One of th' exact dimensions with my own,
But all is anguish and perplexity.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ORESTES.

In other pressures beg the fav'ring gods
To hear thy vows, and shower their blessings on
thee.

ELECTRA.

What blessing from them have I now obtain'd ?

ORESTES.

Thou seest before thee whom but late thine eyes
Most wish'd to see.

ELECTRA.

And dost thou know the name,
Which with fond joy my tongue delights to utter?

ORESTES.

Thy fervent vows, I know, are for Orestes.

ELECTRA.

And of those vows what have I yet obtain'd ?

ORESTES.

I am Orestes : seek no firmer friend.

ELECTRA.

With wily trains thou would'st ensnare me, stran-
ger.

ORESTES.

Then should I spread these trains against myself.

ELECTRA.

But thou would'st mock me in my miseries.

ORESTES.

To mock thy miseries were t' insult my own.

ELECTRA.

Am I indeed conversing with Orestes ?

ORESTES.

Thou seest me present, yet art slow to know me.
 When offer'd on the tomb thou saw'st these loeks,
 When with thy own th' impressions of my feet
 Were measur'd, joy gave wings to expectation,
 And imag'd me before thee. Mark these locks,
 Shorn from my brother's head ; observe them well,
 Compare them with thy own. This tissue, view it,
 The texture is thy own, the rieh embroidery,
 Thine are these figures, by thy curious hand
 Imag'd in gold.—Let not thy joy transport thee :
 Our nearest friends are now our deadliest foes.

ELECTRA.

Thou dearest pledge of this imperial house,
 From thee my hopes, water'd with tears, arose :
 Thy valour shall support our righteous cause,
 And vindicate the glories of thy father.
 Pride of my soul, for my fond tongue must speak,
 The love my father shared, my mother shared,
 Once shared, but justly now my soul abhors her,
 And that poor victim my unhappy sister,
 Is center'd all in thee : thou art my father,
 My mother, sister, my support, my glory,
 My only aid : and heaven's great King shall prosper
 Thy courage, and the justice of thy cause.

ORESTES.

Look down, great King of heaven, look down, be-
 hold
 These deeds of baseness ; see an orphan raee,
 Reft of the parent eagle, that, inwreath'd
 In the dire serpent's spiry volumes, perish'd.
 They, unproteeted, feel th' oppressive pangs
 Of famine, yet too weak to wing their flight,

And, like their parent, fill their nest with prey.
 We are the eagle's offspring, of our father
 Depriv'd, and driv'n in exile from his house.
 Before thy altars, loaded by his hand,
 He bow'd with pious reverence: should thy will
 Permit his young to perish, who shall pay thee
 Like costly honours? Should the eagle's offspring
 Be doom'd to perish, who shall bear thy thunders,
 Dread sign of wrath awak'd on mortal man?
 Nor will this empire, wither'd from its roots,
 Adorn thy altars on the solemn day
 With hallow'd victims. Save us then, protect us,
 To all its former glories raise this house,
 Whose ruin'd towers seem bending to their fall.

CHORUS.

Ye generous offspring of this royal house,
 And guardians of its honour, echeck your transports;
 Lest they are heard, and some incontinent tongue
 Bear them to our bad rulers: may these eyes
 First see the dark wreaths of their funeral piles.

ORESTES.

The voice of Phœbus never shall deceive:
 In dreadful accents utter'd from his shrine
 Aloud he charg'd me to defy the danger,
 Threat'ning to rack my soul with keenest tortures,
 Should I forbear t' avenge my father's death
 With equal retribution on his murderer,
 That proudly riots in my wasted wealth.
 This honour'd shade he charg'd me to avenge,
 Though round enclos'd with evils; to the dead
 This triumph o'er their foes the voice declar'd.
 A lenient joy; to us denouncing ills,
 Corrosive leprosies with rankling tooth

To gnaw our flesh, and taint our healthful bodies
 With ulcerous foulness, changing these fresh locks
 T' untimely white ; with trains of heavier woes
 Rais'd by the Furies from my father's blood,
 Who in the realms of night sees this, and bends
 His gloomy brows. For the dark shafts, that fly
 From those beneath slain by the kindred hand
 Of villain baseness, frenzy, and vain fear
 That trembles at the shadows of the night,
 Rouse, sting, and drive the vice-polluted wretch
 With brazen scourges tortur'd through the city.
 He from the friendly bowl, the hallow'd goblet*,
 The social intercourse, the incens'd altar
 Is chas'd, condemn'd to bear the secret pangs
 Of inly-gnawing guilt : meanwhile the fiends,
 Hatred and Infamy, pursue his steps,
 And drag him to an execrable death.
 Such was the voice of Phœbus, and demands
 My prompt obedience. Could my soul refuse
 T' obey the awful mandate, yet the deed
 Must be accomplish'd ; many urgencies
 Conspire ; the charges of the gods, the grief
 That wounds me for my father, the fierce pangs
 Of penury compel me ; and the shame,
 That burns the generous soul, to leave my country,
 And all those heroes glorious through the world,

* Æschylus here in brief describes the miserable state of the unexpiated murderer, his interdiction from every altar, every table, and every house; no one holding converse or intercourse with him as polluted and abominable.—*Stanley*. This indeed was usually the punishment inflicted by the state, but the poet here finely ascribes it to the vengeance of the Furies.

Whose conquering arms laid Troy's proud towers
in dust,
Slaves to two women ; for his soul is woman :
If not, th' occasion soon will prove his spirit.

CHORUS.

And you, tremendous Destinies, whose power
Is ratified by Jove, mark the firm course
Of justice, and by that direct th' event.
Be th' insults of the hostile tongue repaid
With hostile insults : Justice calls aloud,
Demanding vengeance : let the murd'rous blow,
Requite the murd'rous blow. The solemn voice,
Requiring that oppressive force should feel
Oppressive force, is sanctified by age.

ORESTES.

O thou much injur'd shade, my suffering father,
In thy dear cause what shall I say, what do,
Guided by fortune hither ? Where, O where
Is thy couch spread ? Our light is shaded o'er
With darkness deep as thine ; our youthful graces,
That in this royal house once bloom'd with hope
Fair opening, shrink at the rough blast of sorrow.

CHORUS.

No : the devouring flames, my son, that waste
The body of the dead, touch not the soul ;
That lives, and knows its destined hour to show
Its wrath : yet for the dead our sorrows rise.
Meanwhile th' oppressor stands a signal mark ;
And the just griefs of fathers and of sons
With restless search trace all around for vengeance.

ELECTRA.

Hear me too, O my father ; in those griefs
Which at thy sepulchre thy children pour,

I have a mournful part. Thy tomb receives
 Alike the suppliant and the exile. Which,
 Ah, which of these is well? Which without evils?
 No lenient hand can ease our miseries.

CHORUS.

Yet may the God, that utter'd from the shrine
 His awful voice, from these raise other sounds
 More pleasing; and for these sepulchral notes,
 Notes steep'd in tears, through all these royal rooms
 The voice of joy may ring, and hail their lord
 Return'd to bless them with his kind protection.

ELECTRA.

Yet, O my father, hadst thou greatly fallen
 Beneath the walls of Troy, pierc'd by the spear
 Of some bold Lycian, leaving to thy house
 Thy glory, gracing with illustrious splendor
 Thy children's steps, on that barbaric coast
 The high-rais'd tomb had dignified thy dust,
 And sooth'd our sorrows. In the realms beneath
 Thy friendly shade, amongst the friendly shades
 That fell with honour there, had held its state
 Majestic and rever'd, a king, next those
 Whose awful power those darksome realms obey.
 For to thy last of life thou wast a king,
 The golden reins of empire graced thy hands,
 And thy strong sceptre ruled a willing people.
 But in the fields of Troy thou didst not fall,
 Nor is thy tomb beside Scamander's stream
 With those that perish'd by the hostile spear.
 But, oh, I wish that they, by whom he fell,
 Had first so fallen; and he, though distant far,
 Had heard the rumour of their bloody fate,
 Secure himself, nor tangled in their snares.

CHORUS.

Treasures of gold, my child, are poor to this :
 Thy words are greater than the greatest fortune,
 And all her favours : from thy grief they spring.
 But from this scourge a double clash is heard* ;
 One from th' assistant powers beneath the earth ;
 One from those lords, those hated lords that rule us,
 Whose rude, unhallow'd hands are stain'd with
 blood :

This sounds most dreadful to this royal race.

ELECTRA.

This, like a piercing arrow, wounds my soul.

CHORUS.

Supreme of gods, send from the realms of night,
 The slow-avenging Ate ; bid her rise
 To blast the fraudulent and audacious hands
 Of impious mortals : for a father's wrongs
 She stamps her vengeance deep. When on this
 man

The vengeful sword shall fall, and bleeding nigh
 Lies this bad woman, be it mine to hear
 Their shrieks of death, and answer to their cries
 In notes as dismal. Why should I conceal
 My honest hopes ? Fate spreads her sable wings,
 And hovers o'er their heads ; before their eyes
 Stands Indignation arm'd, and Hate enrag'd,
 Ready to rend their hearts, when Jove shall stretch
 His puissant hands. O thou, whose power subdues

* This grief is compared to the scourge of the Furies, from whence a double clash is heard ; one given by the shade of Agamemnon, ready to assist their revenge ; the other by the murderers, which was most to be feared, because their unhallowed hands were prompt to deeds of violence.

The mighty, to this country seal thy faith,
 And ratify their doom ! On th' impious heads
 I ask for vengeance. You, whose dreaded power
 Th' infernal realms revere, ye Furies, hear me !
 There is a law that, for each drop of blood
 Shed on the earth, demands that blood be shed ;
 For from the slain Erinnys calls for slaughter,
 On ruin heaping ruin. Ye dread powers
 Of hell's dark realms, where are you now ? Behold,
 Ye potent curses of the slain, behold
 The poor remains of this imperial house
 Sunk in distress, and all its glories vanish'd !
 Where, King of heaven, where may we seek for re-
 fuge ?

ELECTRA.

Again my throbbing heart sinks at the sound
 Of thy laments ; and dark'ning o'er my soul
 At thy sad voice comes anguish and despair.
 But when thy words breathe courage, my sick griefs
 Are fled, and fairer fortune seems to smile.
 But with what words to woo her ? Speak aloud
 The miseries which we suffer from our parents ?
 Or smooth our tongues to glozing courtesy ?
 That softens not our miseries : and our spirits,
 Rous'd by the wrongs of our ungentle mother,
 Contract a wolfish fierceness. With bold hand
 She struck the stroke, bold as the Cissian dame
 Train'd to the warrior's arms. She struck him
 once ;

Again she struck him ; her uplifted hands
 Redoubled blow on blow ; swift on his head
 The distant-sounding strokes with steep force fell.
 Bold, unrelenting woman, that could bear

Without one pitying sigh t' entomb the king
 Unhonour'd with his people's grief, the husband
 Without a tear to grace his obsequies.

ORESTES.

All thou hast mentioned are indignities
 That swell my grief to rage. But vengeance arms
 This hand, assisted by the gods, to punish
 The ignominious wrongs done to my father.
 May this revenge be mine, then let me die !

ELECTRA.

When she had killed, with barbarous hands she
 mangled*
 His manly figure, and with this abuse
 Entomb'd him here, studious to make his murder
 A deed of horror, that through all thy life
 Might shock thy soul. Such was thy father's death;
 Such were thy father's ignominious wrongs.
 But me, a poor, deserted, worthless thing,
 Spurn'd like a mischievous cur from my apartments,
 They bid begone : there I could heave the sigh
 In secret, there indulge the mournful pleasure
 To pour the tear unnotic'd and uncheck'd.
 Hear this, and on thy mind imprint it deep,

* To mangle a dead body was more horrid than the act of murder itself, as it made the manes of the deceased a dis-honourable spectacle among the shades below, where they were thought to retain these disfiguring mutilations, and were of course disabled from any acts of vengeance. Plato built a fanciful philosophy on this opinion, of which Virgil knew how to make the true poetic use, when he describes Eriphyle pointing to the wound of her son,

Mæstamque Eriphylen
 Crudelis nati monstrantem vulnera cernit.

The figure of Dæiphobus is represented under the same idea,

Engrave it on the tablet of thy heart ;
 Be resolute, and calm. These things are thus :
 Know this, and let thine indignation rise :
 The time demands a firm, determin'd spirit.
 And thou, my father, hear : on thee I call,
 And with a friendly voice, though choak'd with
 tears,
 Hear us, and aid !

CHORUS.

And with a friendly voice this social train
 To her sad voice accords the strain.
 Hear, mighty shade, and from the realms of night
 Revisit this ethereal light ;
 Against thy foes impart thy aid,
 Be war with war, and blood with blood repaid !
 Ye gods, with justice strike the blow !
 I tremble, as the measures flow ;
 But Fate attends, and hears our call,
 And, stern the bloody forfeit to demand,
 With fury arms the kindred hand,
 And bids the righteous Vengeance fall.
 Here Sorrow holds her dismal state,
 Unsated Murder stains the ground,
 Revenge behind and Terror wait,
 And Desolation stalks his round ;
 Not with a distant foe the war to wage,
 But on this house to pour their rage.
 These are the strains, that to the gods below,
 Th' avenging gods, in rude notes flow :
 Hear us, dread powers ; and this imperial race,
 Victorious in your might, with glory grace !

ORESTES.

My royal father, who unroyally

Wast murder'd, give me to command thy house !

ELECTRA.

Hear me, my father, for I want thy aid ;
 Grant me to share his vengeance on Ægisthus,
 And then escape ; so may the solemn feast
 Be spread to thee : else when the grateful odours
 Are wafted from the festive board, to grace
 The mighty dead, thy shade must want its honours,
 To thee this hand shall bring the costliest off'rings,
 To thee shall consecrate whate'er of wealth
 Ought, from thy treasures, to adorn my nuptials ;
 And with the holiest reverence grace thy tomb.

ORESTES.

Earth, send my father to behold the combat !

ELECTRA.

Inspire him, Proserpine, with glorious force !

ORESTES.

Think on the bath where thou wastmurder'd, father !

ELECTRA.

Think on the net in which they murder'd thee !

ORESTES.

Toils, other than of brass, entangle thee.

ELECTRA.

Th' inexplicable robes' accrû'd contrivance.

ORESTES.

My father, cannot these dishonours raise thee ?

ELECTRA.

Dost thou not raise thy honour'd head ? O send
 Justice to aid thy friends : or if thy soul
 Sinks with its wrongs, nor rises to revenge them,
 Be the like sufferings ours ! But, O my father,
 Hear our last cries, and sitting on thy tomb
 Behold thy children : pity my weak sex,

Pity his manly sorrow, nor extinguish
 Th' illustrious line of Pelops : so in death
 Thou dost not die ; for children, when the tomb
 Demands the parent, with surviving glory
 Preserve his fame ; the corks that buoy the line,
 And save the net from sinking to the bottom.
 O hear us ; for thy sake we pour these plaints.
 Thou shalt preserve thy glory, if with honour
 Thou hear our words, our blameless words, that
 honour
 The fortune of thy tomb, else unlamented !—
 Now, brother, since thy soul is rous'd to dare
 This deed, trust on the god, and do it straight.

ORESTES.

I shall : but let me pause awhile to ask
 Wherefore she sent these off'rings, on what motive
 Thus late she soothes th' immedicable ill,
 Paying this wretched honour to the dead
 That cares not for it. What these presents mean
 Surpasses my conjecture, but her crime
 Outweighs their worth ; for all, that can be offer'd
 T' atone for one man's blood, is spent in vain.
 Yet, if you know, explain her motives to me.

CHORUS.

I know, for I was present : Dreams and visions,
 The terrors of the night, appall'd her soul ;
 Her guilty fears urg'd her to send these off'rings.

ORESTES.

Told she the dreams, that so alarm'd her fears ?

CHORUS.

She fancied she had given a dragon birth.

ORESTES.

And what was the event ? Tell me in brief,

CHORUS.

This new-born dragon, like an infant child,
Laid in the cradle seem'd in want of food ;
And in her dream she held it to her breast.

ORESTES.

Without a wound 'scaped she the hideous monster ?

CHORUS.

The milk he drew was mix'd with clotted blood.

ORESTES.

'Tis not for nought this vision from her husband.

CHORUS.

She cried out in her sleep with the affright ;
And many lamps, dim-gleaming through the darkness,

To do her pleasure enter'd the apartment.
Soon to the tomb she sends these funeral honours,
Medicinal, as she hopes, to heal her ills.

ORESTES.

But to this earth, and to my father's tomb
I make my supplications, that in me
Her dream may be accomplish'd ; and I judge
It aptly corresponds : for as this serpent,
Leaving the place that once was mine, and laid
Swath'd like an infant, seiz'd that breast which
nurs'd

My tender age, and mingled with the milk
Drew clotted blood ; and as with the affright
She call'd out in her sleep ; it cannot be
But, as she nurs'd this monster, she must die
A violent death ; and with a dragon's rage
This hand shall kill her, as her dream declares.
Or how wilt thou expound these prodigies ?

CHORUS.

Thus may it be. But now instruct thy friends
What each must singly do, and each not do.

ORESTES.

Few words suffice: then mark me: let HER enter;
And keep, I charge thee, keep my purpose secret;
That they, who slew an honourable man
By curs'd deceit, may by deceit be caught
In the same snare, and perish; so the God,
Powerful Apollo, from whose sacred voice
Nothing but truth can flow, admonish'd me.
I, like a stranger, harness'd in this coarse
And way-worn garb, with Pylades my friend,
Will as a guest and friend knock at the gate:
Our tongues shall imitate the rustic accent
Familiar to the mountain-race of Phocis*.
Nor will the servants, 'tis a villainous house,
Receive us cheerfully; but as we are
There shall we stand; while each, that passes by,
With shrewd remarks shall shake his head and say,
Why are these strangers thus inhospitably
Excluded from the gates, if their arrival
Ægisthus knows 'midst his domestic train?
But if I pass the threshold of the gates,
And find him seated on my father's throne,

* Clytemnestra had told Agamemnon that Strophius king of Phœœa had taken Orestes under his protection from any dangers or disturbances that might arise in the state: the young prince had indeed the good fortune to escape from his mother, and was hospitably received at Phocis, from whence he now returned in disguise, attended by Pylades the son of Strophius, whose friendship was so faithful to Orestes in all his distresses, that it became proverbial.

Or should he come t' accost me, be assur'd
 Quick as the eye can glance, e'er he can say
 Whence is this stranger? my impatient sword
 Shall strike him dead. So shall the fell Erinnys,
 That with a horrid joy riots in slaughter,
 Quaff this third bowl of blood.—Go then, Electra,
 Be watchful; see that all things in the house
 Be well dispos'd. And you, I charge you guard
 Your tongues; be silent where you ought, and
 where

Your voice can aid me, speak. The rest my friend
 That guides my sword to vengeance, will o'ersee.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Pregnant with ills the dreary air
 Gives sickness, pain, and terror birth;
 The seas, that wind around the earth,
 Fatal to man their hideous monsters bear:
 Each forest in its shaggy sides,
 That darkens o'er the perilous ground,
 The lurking, rav'nous savage hides,
 Whilst fierce birds wheel the summits round;
 And mark with what tempestuous rage
 Black from the skies the rushing winds engage.

ANTISTROPHE I.

But who the dangerous thoughts can tell
 That in man's daring bosom roll;
 Or whirl the more tempestuous soul
 Of woman, when the tyrant passions swell?
 When love, to torment near allied,

Bids frenzy rule the troubled hour ?
 Love, that exerts with wanton pride
 O'er female hearts despotic power ;
 And binds in his ungentle chain
 Each savage of the wood, each monster of the main.

STROPHE II.

Think with what sullen frenzy fir'd
 The Thestian dame with ruthless hand*
 Cast on the hearth the fatal brand ;
 The flames consum'd it, and her son expir'd.
 With horror think on Scylla's deed† :
 To win the favour of the foes,
 The golden bracelets were the meed,
 Against her father's life she rose,
 Approach'd the sleeping monarch's bed,
 And reft the sacred honours of his head.

* When Althea, the daughter of Thestius, was delivered of Meleager, the Destinies attended at her labour, and upon the birth of the child, throwing a log on the fire as they spun his thread of life, pronounced this charm, " O new-born child, we assign the same period of existence to this log and to thee ;" then vanished. Althea snatched the log from the flames, and preserved it with great care, till Meleager having slain her two brothers, for rudely taking the head of the Calydonian boar from Atalanta, to whom he had presented it, this unnatural mother threw the fatal brand into the fire, and the charm of the Destinies was fulfilled. The story is told by Ovid, Met. l. 8.

† This story is also told by Ovid, ibid. Minos, the celebrated king of Crete, was besieging Alcathoe, where Nisus reigned, on whose head grew a lock of purple hair, on which the safety of the city depended. Scylla, a daughter of Nisus, in love with the Cretan king, as Ovid relates it, or bribed with some female gewgaws according to Æschylus, entered her father's apartment as he lay asleep, and cut off this charmed lock. The city was immediately taken.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Amongst these deeds of blood, that stain
 The annals of the times of old,
 Be that unhallow'd couch enroll'd,
 Whose guilty loves this royal house profane.
 Enroll'd be all that female hate
 Form'd 'gainst the chief in arms renown'd ;
 The chief, whose glorious, awful state
 Foes 'midst their rage with reverence own'd ;
 Those glories, though they blaze no more,
 Quench'd by a woman's hand, I still adore.

EPODE.

In the black annals of far distant time
 The Lesbian dames recorded stand* ;
 But the soul shudders at the crime,
 And execrates the murders of their hand :
 Basely at once the husbands bleed ;
 Th' indignant Gods abhor the deed.
 And shall man dare with impious voice t' approve
 Deeds, that offend the pow'rs above ?
 Through the gored breast
 With rage imprest
 The sword of justice hews the dreadful wound ;
 And haughty might
 That mocks at right,
 Like the vile dust is trampled on the ground.

* This is a very tragical tale. All the men of Lemnos that were able to bear arms, had invaded Thrace, and continued the war three years : their wives, stung with rage and jealousy, formed a horrid design, which they executed the very night on which their husbands returned, to murder every male on the island. Hypsipyle alone saved her father Thoas. Statius has related the whole transaction with his usual spirit. Theb. v. l. 70.

Righteous are thy decrees, eternal King,
 And from the roots of justice spring :
 These shall strike deep, and flourish wide,
 Whilst all, that scorn them, perish in their pride.
 Fate the portentous sword prepares,
 And the rough labours of the anvil shares ;
 Wide through the house a tide of blood
 Flows where a former tide had flow'd ;
 Erinnys marks the destin'd hour,
 Vengeful her meditated rage to pour.

ORESTES.

What, does no servant hear me knock ? within
 Who waits ? again I knock : does no one hear ?
 A third time to the servants of this house
 I call, if to the stranger at his gate
 The great Ægisthus bears a courteous soul.

SERVANT.

Forbear, I hear. Who art thou, and from whence ?

ORESTES.

Go tell the lords of this fair house, to them
 I come, charg'd with strange tidings : haste ;
 For now the sable chariot of the night
 Rolls on apace ; and the dark hour exhorts
 The way-spent traveller to repose beneath
 The hospitable roof. Call forth the matron,
 That has the charge of these domestic cares ;
 More decent, if a man ; for modesty
 There checks the falt'ring tongue, but to a man
 More confident a man speaks free and open.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES,
ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Speak, strangers, what your wants ; here shall you
find

All that becomes an house like this ; warm baths,
Refreshment of your toils, the well-spread couch
Inviting soft repose, and over all
An eye regarding justice. If your business
Be of more serious import, asking counsel,
The province this of men ; we will inform them.

ORESTES.

A Phocian am I, from the town of Daulis.
Occasions of my own call'd me to Argos,
Nor ask'd a better dress, than this coarse garb
Familiar to me : onwards as I travell'd
I met a man unknown, myself to him
Unknown ; he courteous question'd me how far
I journey'd, and inform'd me of my way,
Strophius of Phocis, so I chanc'd to learn ;
Stranger, says he, since business of thy own
Leads thee to Argos, let me charge thy honour
To tell his parents that the young Orestes
Is dead. Forget it not. Whether his friends
With solemn obsequies will fetch him hence,
Or in eternal rest our friendly earth
Shall lay him in her hospitable bosom,
Bring back their pleasure ; for the brazen urn
Now holds the ashes of the honour'd youth,
Whom we lament. This, faithful to my charge,

Have I deliver'd ; if to kindred ears,
And those, whose pow'r is sovereign here, I know
not.

But it is meet that his parent knew the event.

ELECTRA.

Ah me ! thus desolation on our head
Is fall'n. O thou relentless curse, whose rage
Hung o'er this house, has thy unsparing eye
Mark'd what we lodg'd at distance, aiming there.
Thy cruel shafts, to rob me of my friends ?
E'en now Orestes, who with cautious tread
Had from this gulf of ruin freed his foot,
E'en he, the hope medicinal to the madness
Of this ill house, shows that our hope betrays us.

ORESTES.

It were my wish to have borne other tidings,
More welcome to the lords of this fair mansion,
And meriting their hospitable favours :
For what more strongly to benevolence
Can bind the grateful soul ? yet I should deem it
An impious wrong not to disclose e'en these,
Unwelcome, as they must be, to his friends,
So solemnly entrusted to my charge.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Not less for this shalt thou receive such usage
As thy worth challenges : not less for this
Respected here : another would have come
Charg'd with the same sad message.. But the hour
Demands refreshment for the stranger, spent
With the long travel of the weary day.
Lead him to those apartments, where the men
Are well receiv'd ; let his attendant follow,
His fellow traveller ; let thy diligent care,

I charge thee, minister to all his wants.
 We to the rulers of this house will bear
 These tidings, and amongst our friends consult
 What measures in this sad event to form.

CHORUS, *alone.*

Now, my dear partners, slaves to this proud house,
 Now let us show our fortitude, now teach
 Our tongues a noble daring for Orestes.

Thou hallow'd earth, thou hallow'd mound
 Whose high sepulchral round
 Lies on the royal chief, that o'er the main
 To glory led his martial train,
 Now hear us, now impart your aid :
 On this important hour,
 Persuasion, try thy fraudulent power :
 And thou, through night's surrounding shade,
 Come Mercury, from the shades below,
 And when the falchion flames, direct th' avenging
 blow !

SERVANT, GILISSA, CHORUS.

SERVANT.

This stranger, it should seem, brings mournful tidings ;
 I see the tear steal from Gilissa's eye,
 Nurse of Orestes. Wherefore dost thou pass
 These doors ? the sorrows, that attend thy steps,

Shall here find no reward : expect it not.

GILISSA.

My royal mistress order'd me with speed
To call Ægisthus to these stranger guests ;
That man from man he with more certainty
Might learn this fresh report. Before the servants
She kept her smile beneath a mournful eye,
To hide her joy at this event ; to her
A joy indeed, but to this house a tale
Of deep affliction. He too, when he hears
The narrative, will from his soul rejoice.
Ah me ! what sorrows in successive train
Have in this house of Atreus pierc'd my soul
From ancient times : but never have I suffer'd
A loss like this : with patience other ills,
Well as I might, I bore. But my Orestes
Was the dear object of my anxious thoughts ;
An infant I receiv'd him from his mother ;
I nurs'd him, many a night to all his wants,
To all his cries attentive, with a care
That now avails me not : e'er reason dawns,
The nurse's care is needful ; in his cradle
The infant knows not to express his wants,
Rise they from thirst, or hunger, or the calls
Of nature : with fond diligence I mark'd
Th' instinctive cry, nor with a squeamish niceness
Thought scorn of any office ; for my love
Made all delightful. Now, unhappy me !
My dear Orestes is, I hear, no more.
But I am sent in haste to that vile man,
Whose rank pollution stains this noble house :.
With pleasure this report will he receive.

CHORUS.

With what appointment does she bid him come ?

GILISSA.

Appointment ! Let me comprehend thy meaning.

CHORUS.

If with his train of guards, or unattended.

GILISSA.

She bids him come attended with his guards.

CHORUS.

No, tell him not, this hated lord ; but wear

A face of cheerfulness ; and urge him hither

Alone, devoid of fear, to be inform'd.

For the mind catches from the messenger

A secret elevation, and bold swell.

GILISSA.

This news, it seems, is welcome to thy soul.

CHORUS.

But what if heaven's high King redress these ills ?

GILISSA.

How ? With Orestes all our hopes are dead.

CHORUS.

Not all. This needs no prophet to unfold it.

GILISSA.

Hast thou heard ought disproving this report ?

CHORUS.

Go, bear thy message : do as thou art order'd :

The gods, whose care this is, will guide th' event.

GILISSA.

I go, in all observant of thy precepts.

May what is best come from the fav'ring Gods !

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Now my righteous prayer approve,
Father and King of gods, Olympian Jove !

To thee may I unfold
Such vows, as from the modest and the wise
In the cause of justice rise.

O, may these eyes behold
Her power, ador'd by all, maintain
The glories of her awful reign !

Hear me, monarch of the sky,
Protect him with thy guardian care ;
O'er his foes exalt him high,
That lord it in the regal chair !
His ruin'd honours thus restor'd,
With fiercer rage thy vengeance shall be pour'd.

ANTISTROPHE.

Yok'd to affliction's iron car
This orphan son of a lov'd father spare :
Restrain its headlong force ;
And let the rapid wheels, with many a bound
Rolling o'er the rugged ground,
Here stop their painful course.

And you, that guard this royal seat,
Its blazing wealth, its gorgeous state,

Hear, propitious gods, and save !
Let not the blood of former slain
Fresh returns of vengeance crave ;
No more these crimson'd mansions stain :
Slaughter no more from slaughter rise,

If low beneath the righteous sword he lies !

MONOLOGUE.

Thou, that hast fix'd thy dreary reign

Deep in the yawning gulf below,

Yet let him rise, yet view this scene,

Around his gloomy eyeballs throw,

Distinct and clear the vengeance mark,

That threatens from her covert dark !

Thou, son of Maia, come, and with thee lead

Success, that crowns the daring deed :

To form the close and dark design,

Whether th' ambiguous tale thou lov'st to weave,

And throw around the veil of night ;

Or bid'st e'en truth itself deceive,

Display'd in all the dazzling blaze of light ;

The powers of secrecy are thine.

Then shall this pensive female train

These rich oblations pay no more ;

No more the melancholy strain,

Tuned to the voice of anguish, pour.

Raptur'd their triumph shall I see,

My friends from ruffian danger free.

And thou, when thy stern part is come, be bold :

Think how in blood thy father roll'd :

And when, "my son, my son," she cries,

To melt thy manly mind with plaintive moan,

Then to her guilty soul recal

Thy murder'd father's dying groan ;

And to his angry vengeance let her fall :

Like Perseus turn thy ruthless eye* ;

* The mention of Perseus here obliquely insinuates, that Clytemnestra was as dangerous and dreadful as Medusa, on whom Perseus could not look when he slew her.

Just to thy friends above, thy friends below,
 Aim with applauded rage the destin'd wound;
 Great in thy vengeance rush upon the foe,
 And strike the murd'rer bleeding to the ground.

ÆGISTHUS, GILISSA, CHORUS.

ÆGISTHUS.

This message has a voice, that calls me forth
 To learn with more assurance this report,
 By certain strangers brought, touching the death
 Of young Orestes; most unwelcome this;
 And the relation to this house will add
 Fresh terror to the fear, whose unheal'd wound
 Smarts inwardly and rankles. Should I give
 Full credit to this tale, or rather deem it
 The idle offspring of these women's fears,
 That lightly rose, and will as lightly die?
 Tell me, what proof gives credit to this rumour?

GILISSA.

Indeed we heard it: but go in, examine
 These strangers; less regard is due to rumour,
 Than to clear information learnt from them.

ÆGISTHUS.

I wish to see this stranger, and to ask him
 If he himself was present at his death,
 Or only speaks from an obscure report.
 Deception finds no easy entrance here.

CHORUS.

What should I say, eternal King,
 Or how begin the strain?
 These passions how contain,

That in my throbbing breast tumultuous spring ?
 O that, in aid, my daring deed
 Might all the force of words exceed !
 For now distain'd with blood the bick'ring sword
 The contest ends ; if all
 This royal race shall fall ;
 Or the just laws their ancient state resuming,
 And liberty her light reluming,
 Hail to his father's rights the son restor'd.
 'Gainst two fierce wolves the youth contesting
 stands
 Alone : may Heaven-sent conquest grace his hands !

ÆGISTHUS.

Oh ! I am slain.

(within)

CHORUS.

That groan ! again that groan !
 Whence ? What is done ? Who rules the storm
 within ?
 The deed is finish'd : let us keep aloof,
 And seem unconscious of these ills : best stand
 At distance, whilst destruction ends her work.

SERVANT.

Wo, wo to me ! Wo to my slaughter'd lord !
 Wo on my wretched head, and wo again !
 Ægisthus is no more. But open here,
 Ye females, instantly unbar these doors ;
 Th' occasion calls for vigour, not t' assist
 The slain. Ho, here ! What, call I to the deaf ?
 Or sleep you ? Where is Clytemnestra ? How
 Employed ? Her life stands at the sword's bare
 point,
 And ready vengeance seems to prompt the blow.

CLYTEMNESTRA, SERVANT, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What means thy clamour ? Whence these shrieks
of wo ?

SERVANT.

They, that were rumour'd dead, have slain the liv-
ing.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah me ! I understand thee, though thy words
Are dark ; and we shall perish in the toils,
E'en as we spread them. Give me instantly
The slaught'ring axe ; it shall be seen if yet
We know the way to conquer, or are conquer'd :
These daring measures have my wrongs enforc'd.

**ORESTES, PYLADES, CLYTEMNESTRA,
CHORUS.**

ORESTES.

Thee, too, I seek. He has his righteous meed.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah me ! my dear Ægisthus, thou art dead.

ORESTES.

And dost thou love the man ? In the same tomb
Shalt thou be laid, nor e'en in death forsake him.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, stay thy hand, my son : my child, my child,
Revere this breast, on which thou oft hast slept,
And oft thy infant lips have press'd its milk.

ORESTES.

What shall I do, my Pylades ? Restrain'd
By filial reverence, dread to kill my mother ?

PYLADES.

Where then the other oracles of Phœbus,
Given from the Pythian shrine ? The faithful vows,
The solemn adjurations, whither vanish'd ?
Deem all the world thy foes, save the just gods.

ORESTES.

Thou hast convinc'd me ; thy reproofs are just.—
Follow him : on his body will I slay thee.
Alive thou held'st him dearer than my father ;
Then sleep with him in death, since thou could'st
love him,
And hate the man who most deserv'd thy love.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I nurs'd thy youth, and wish to tend thy age.

ORESTES.

What, shall my father's murd'rer dwell with me ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The Fates, my son, the Fates decreed his death.

ORESTES.

And the same Fates decree that thou shalt die.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Dost thou not dread a mother's curse, my son ?

ORESTES.

That mother cast me out to want and misery.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Not so ; I sent thee to a friendly house.

ORESTES.

Though nobly born, a slave, and doubly sold.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What in exchange, what price did I receive ?

ORESTES.

I blush to charge thee with the guilty price.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Blush not; but with it name thy father's lightness.

ORESTES.

Sitting in wanton ease, blame not his toils.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Barr'd from our husbands, irksome are our hours.

ORESTES.

Yet in your ease your husbands' toils support you.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

My son, my son, thou wilt not kill thy mother!

ORESTES.

Thy hand, not mine, is guilty of thy death.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Take heed; avoid a mother's angry Furies.

ORESTES.

Relaxing here, how shall I 'scape my father's?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Methinks while yet alive before my tomb
I pour the funeral strain, that nought avails me.

ORESTES.

Nought: for my father's fate ordains thy death.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah me! I gave this dragon birth, I nurs'd him:
These terrors of the night were more than phan-
toms.

ORESTES.

Foul and unnatural was thy murd'rous deed:
Foul and unnatural be thy punishment.

CHORUS, *alone*.

The double ruin e'en of these awakes
Our grief. But since his cruel fate has plung'd

Orestes deep in blood, pour we the prayer
That his fair day set not in endless night.

STROPHE.

Revenge at length is come, though slow her pace,
For Priam's ruin'd race.

In Agamemnon's royal hall,

Rous'd by the Pythian's god's inspiring call,
The glorious exile stands;

With lion port, with martial mein,

Such as the god of war is seen,

The sword of justice light'ning in his hands,
Fir'd by the prompting voice divine,

That thunder'd from the shrine,

Dauntless he dared these dang'rous courts to tread,
Hark ! 'tis his voice : the walls around

His cheerful shouts resound :

No more the tyrant's malice shall he dread ;
The tyrants' lavish hands no more

Shall waste his treasur'd store ;

No more their pride usurp his throne,

Low in the dust their hostile pride o'erthrown.

ANTISTROPHE.

With dark and secret fraud his coward mind

The bloody deed design'd.

Revenge, with solemn steps and slow

Advancing, meditates the secret blow ;

- Daughter of heaven's high Lord,

Though by the name of Justice known

Her sovereign power weak mortals own,

She guides his hand, she points his thund'ring

sword ;

And rushing with impetuous might

Assists him in the fight,

Breathing destructive fury on his foes.

Nor less 'gainst HER whose treach'rous hand

This injur'd house profan'd,

For his deep shrine with fury Phœbus glows.

For e'en the gods with sacred awe

Revere this righteous law,

To spurn the guilt that asks their aid :

And be this Heaven-commanding law obey'd.

EPODE.

Cheerful the light begins to rise.

Sunk was our sun, and long in darkness lay,

Nor promis'd the return of day :

Soon may his beams revisit our sad eyes !

When these cleans'd floors no more retain

Polluting murder's sanguine stain,

Time haply may behold his orient rays

O'er these illumin'd turrets blaze ;

And Fortune, mounted on her golden seat,

Rejoice in our triumphant state,

Rejoice to see our glories rise,

And our unclouded sun flame o'er the sapphire skies.

ORESTES, CHORUS.

ORESTES.

Behold the proud oppressors of my country,
The murderers of my father, the destroyers
Of his imperial house : commanding awe

When seated on their thrones, retaining yet

Their loves, of their affection if with truth

Hence we conjecture ought, and their oath stands

Inviolate; for to my father's death
 They form'd th' unhallow'd compact, and to die
 Together: these events confirm their oath.
 Behold again, you that attentive mark
 These ills, behold this artifice, the toils
 That tangled hand and foot my suff'ring father.
 This was his vestment, from a ring around it,
 Spread it, display it to th' all-seeing sun,
 That with his awful eye he may behold
 My mother's impious deeds, and in the hour
 Of judgment be my witness, that with justice
 My vengeance fell on her. As for Ægisthus,
 I reck not of his death; a sacred law
 He dared pollute; and justly has he paid
 The dreadful penalty. She 'gainst her husband,
 Once the dear object of her love, to which
 Her swelling zone bore many a precious pledge,
 Now flam'd with ranc'rous hate, and murd'rous
 malice.

What noxious monster, what envenom'd viper,
 That poisons with a touch th' unwounded body,
 E'er breath'd such pestilent and baleful rage?
 You view that vestment: tell me now, were all
 The powers of language mine, what should I call
 it?

Toils planted for a savage? or the bands
 That for the tomb enwrap the dead? a curse
 Well may you call it, and the gyves of hell.
 Such may the pilferer wear, the thievish slave
 That pillages his guests, and trains his life
 To plunder; such the ruffian, whose rude hand
 Prompted to murd'rous deeds is stain'd with blood.

Never, ye gods, may such a woman share
My bed : no, rather childless let me perish !

CHORUS.

O horror, horror ! dreadful were your deeds,
And dreadful is your death ; the ling'ring ven-
geance

Burst with redoubled force. This was her deed,
Her cursed deed : this vestment is my witness,
Ting'd by Ægisthus' sword ; the gushing blood,
Now stiffen'd, stains its tyrian-tinctur'd radiance.
Now I applaud his just revenge ; now weep,
Viewing this bloody robe, and mourn these deeds,
The suff'rings of this house, and e'en this conquest,
Dreadful atonement ! never shall the life
Of mortal man be pass'd uncharg'd with ills :
On some with rapid rage the tempest rolls ;
Slowly on some the gath'ring clouds advance.

ORESTES.

Be that another's care : I see the doom
Assign'd to me. For as the rapid car
Whirl'd from the course by the impetuous steeds
That scorn the reins, so my exulting heart
Bounds with tumultuous and ungovern'd passions.
Yet let me plead, whilst reason holds its seat,
Plead to my friends, that in the cause of justice
I slew my mother ; for her impious hands,
Stain'd with my father's blood, call'd down revenge
From the offended gods. And here I plead,
To mitigate the deed, the Pythian prophet
Phœbus, whose voice pronounc'd me from the
shrine,
If I achiev'd the vengeance, free from guilt :

To my refusal dreadful was his threat
 Of punishment, beyond the reach of thought.
 Graced with this branch of olive, and this wreath,
 I will approach his shrine, his central throne,
 And his eternal fires, there to be cleans'd
 From the pollution of this kindred blood :
 No other roof receives me ; so the God
 Enjoin'd. Meanwhile let Argos be inform'd,
 And all this people witness, what a weight
 Of miseries oppress'd me : dead or living,
 A vagrant, and an exile from my country,
 I leave these words behind me ; having done
 What honour gave in charge, I shall not blush
 Hearing my fame reviled, nor bear in absence
 The tongue of obloquy, the state of Argos
 Freed by this hand, that boldly crush'd these dra-
 gons.—

Ha ! look, ye female captives, what are these
 Vested in sable stoles, of Gorgon aspect,
 Their starting locks tangled with knots of vipers !
 I fly, I fly ; I cannot bear the sight.

CHORUS.

What phantoms, what unreal shadows thus
 Distract thee ? victor in thy father's cause,
 To him most dear, start not at fancied terrors.

ORESTES.

These are no phantoms, no unreal shadows ;
 I know them now ; my mother's angry Furies.

CHORUS.

The blood as yet is fresh upon thy hands,
 And thence these terrors sink into thy soul.

ORESTES.

Royal Apollo, how their numbers swell !

And the foul gore drops from their hideous eyes.

CHORUS.

Within are lavers. Soon as thou shalt reach
His shrine, Phœbus will free thee from these ills.

ORESTES.

And see you nothing there? look, look! I see
them.

Distraction's in the sight: I fly, I fly.

CHORUS.

Blest may'st thou be: and may the God, whose eye
Looks on thee, guard thee in these dreadful dan-
gers?

Thrice on this royal house the bursting storm
Hath pour'd its rage in blood. Thyestes first
Mourn'd for his slaughter'd sons. Th' imperial lord,
The leader of the martial hosts of Greece,
Next fell beneath the murd'ring sword, and stain'd
'Th' ensanguin'd bath. Then came th' intrepid
youth

Arm'd with the sword—of Freedom should I say,
Or fate!—How long shall vengeance pour her ter-
rors?

When curb her fiery rage, and sleep in peace?

SELECTIONS
FROM THE
TRAGEDIES
OF
SOPHOCLES.

TRANSLATED BY

THOMAS FRANCKLIN.

LIFE OF **SOPHOCLES.**

SOPHOCLES, surnamed the Bee and the Attic Siren, was born at Athens, in the year 495 B. C. He gave early proofs of his talent for poetry, and aptitude for the business of government. He reached the dignity of Archon, and, in this capacity, commanded the armies of the republic of Athens, with considerable reputation. As a tragic writer, he shared the favour of the Athenian public with Euripides, his cotemporary and rival. Sophocles died at the advanced age of eighty-five. Some of his biographers relate that he expired from an ecstacy of joy produced by his having carried the prize at the Olympic Games. But his number of years may alone account for his dissolution. He is said to have composed one hundred and twenty tragedies, of which seven only remain.



ŒDIPUS TYRANNUS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ŒDIPUS, *King of Thebes.*

JOCASTA, *wife of Œdipus.*

CREON, *brother to Jocasta.*

TIRESIAS, *a blind prophet of Thebes.*

A Shepherd from Corinth.

A Messenger.

An Old Shepherd, formerly belonging to Laius.

High Priest of Jupiter.

CHORUS, *composed of the Priests and ancient Men of Thebes, Theban Youths, Children of Œdipus, Attendants, &c.*

SCENE—Thebes, before the palace of Œdipus.

ŒDIPUS TYRANNUS.

A C T I.

SCENE I.

ŒDIPUS, HIGH PRIEST OF JUPITER.

ŒDIPUS.

O ! MY lov'd sons, the youthful progeny
Of ancient Cadmus, wherefore sit you here

It is scarce possible to conceive any thing more solemn and magnificent than the opening of this tragedy ; in the front of the scene is the palace of Œdipus ; before it, an altar erected to him ; at the foot of which, we see a number of young men of the first quality in Thebes, with boughs of supplication in their hands, and prostrate on the earth ; with them the high priest of Jupiter, and a little behind, several other priests and old men, as preparing for a sacrifice ; beyond them we have a distant view of the two temples of Minerva, with their altars, and a large concourse of people standing round them, seeming, by various acts of worship, to deprecate the general calamity ; the scenery and decorations, necessary on this occasion, account in some measure for the otherwise incredible expense which the Athenians are said to have been at, in the representation of this piece.

O ! my lov'd sons, &c. Œdipus, alarmed at the groans and lamentations of his people thronging to the altar, comes out of his palace to enquire into the cause of their distress ; this

And suppliant thus, with sacred boughs adorn'd,
 Croud to our altars ? frequent sacrifice,
 And prayers and sighs and sorrows fill the land.
 I could have sent to learn the fatal cause ;
 But see, your anxious sov'reign comes himself
 To know it all from you : behold your king,
 Renowned Œdipus ; do thou, old man,
 For best that office suits thy years, inform me,
 Why you are come ; is it the present ill
 That calls you here, or dread of future woe ?
 Hard were indeed the heart that did not feel
 For grief like yours, and pity such distress :
 If there be aught that Œdipus can do
 To serve his people, know me for your friend.

PRIEST.

O ! king, thou see'st what numbers throng thy altars ;
 Here, bending sad beneath the weight of years,
 The hoary priests, here croud the chosen youth
 Of Thebes, with these a weak and suppliant train
 Of helpless infants, last in me behold

humanity and tenderness recommend his character to the audience, and naturally excite that pity and compassion which the poet intends to raise for his succeeding misfortunes ; he calls his subjects the progeny of Cadmus, who was the founder of Thebes, about two hundred years before his time.

With sacred boughs adorn'd. When prayers and supplications were to be made, either in the temples or other places, the petitioners carried boughs in their hands, bound round with fillets of white wool ; this was always looked on as a mark of distress, which entitled them to a peculiar regard, rendered their persons sacred, and protected them from all violence ; it is not improbable, but that this custom among the Greeks was borrowed from the Jews, whom we find carrying boughs on solemn festivals. See Macchab. chap. 13.

The minister of Jove : far off thou see'st
 Assembled multitudes, with laurel crown'd,
 To where Minerva's hallow'd temples rise
 Frequent repair, or where Ismenus laves
 Apollo's sacred shrine : too well thou know'st,
 Thy wretched Thebes, with dreadful storms op-
 press'd,
 Scarce lifts her head above the whelming flood ;
 The teeming earth her blasted harvest mourns,
 And on the barren plain the flocks and herds
 Unnumber'd perish ; dire abortion thwarts
 The mother's hopes, and painful she brings forth
 The half-form'd infant ; baleful pestilence
 Hath laid our city waste, the fiery god
 Stalks o'er deserted Thebes ; whilst with our groans
 Enrich'd, the gloomy god of Erebus
 Triumphant smiles : O ! Œdipus, to thee
 We bend ; behold these youths, with me they kneel,
 And suppliant at thy altars sue for aid,
 To thee the first of men, and only less
 Than them whose favour thou alone can'st gain,
 The gods above : thy wisdom yet may heal
 The deep-felt wounds, and make the powers di-
 vine
 Propitious to us : Thebes long since to thee
 Her safety ow'd, when from the Sphynx deliver'd

From the Sphynx deliver'd. The story of the Sphynx, from the variety of accounts handed down to us concerning it, is almost as much a riddle to us as it was to Œdipus: the Sphynx, according to poetical history, was a monster with the face of a woman, wings of a bird, body of a dog, and claws like a lion; she dwelt near Thebes, and every day destroyed many people; the oracle declared that she could never be conquered, till some one was found that could expound a certain

Thy grateful people saw thee, not by man
 But by the gods instructed, save the land ;
 Now, then, thou best of kings, assist us now,
 O ! by some mortal or immortal aid
 Now succour the distress'd ! on wisdom oft
 And prudent counsels, in the hour of ill,
 Success awaits ; O ! dearest prince, support,
 Relieve thy Thebes, on thee its saviour once
 Again it calls ; now, if thou would'st not see
 The mem'ry perish of thy former deeds,
 Let it not call in vain, but rise, and save.
 With happiest omens once and fair success
 We saw thee crown'd ; O ! be thyself again,
 And may thy will and fortune be the same !
 If thou art yet to reign, O ! king, remember
 A sovereign's riches is a peopled realm ;
 For what will ships or lofty towers avail
 Unarm'd with men to guard and to defend them ?

ŒDIPUS.

O ! my unhappy sons, too well I know
 Your sad estate ; I know the woes of Thebes ;
 And yet among you lives not such a wretch

riddle, or ænigma, which she proposed. After many unsuccessful attempts Œdipus came and explained it ; the Sphynx was destroyed ; the nation delivered, and Œdipus rewarded for it with the kingdom of Thebes ; some authors interpret the Sphynx into a maritime force, invading Bœotia under the command of a woman, whom Œdipus slew ; others pretend that the Sphynx was a natural daughter of Laius, who slew all those Thebans, who dared to mention an oracle of Apollo, said to have been given to Cadmus, concerning the succession to the throne, and declaring bastards incapable of inheriting it ; the fable says, that she defied them to produce this oracle ; but that it was revealed to Œdipus in a dream, who repeated it publicly, and destroyed his sister.

As Oedipus ; for O ! on me, my children,
 Your sorrows press ; alas ! I feel for you
 My people, for myself, for Thebes, for all ;
 Think not, I slept regardless of your ills ;
 O ! no, with many a tear I wept your fate,
 And oft in meditation deep revolv'd
 How best your peace and safety to restore :
 The only med'cine that my thoughts could find
 I have administer'd, Menœceus' son,
 The noble Creon, went by my command
 To Delphos, from Apollo's shrine to know
 What must be done to save this wretched land ;
 'Tis time he were return'd ; I wonder much
 At his delay ; if, when he comes, your king
 Perform not all the god enjoins, then say
 He is the worst of men.

PRIEST.

O ! king, thy words
 Are gracious, and if right these youth inform me,
 Creon is here.

OEDIPUS.

O ! Phœbus, grant he come
 With tidings cheerful as the smile he wears !

PRIEST.

He is the messenger of good ; for see,
 His brows are crown'd with laurel.

His brows are crown'd with laurel. It was usual for those who, on consulting the oracle of Delphos, had received a favourable answer, to put on a crown of laurel at their return, in token of their success : Creon had reason to look upon his in that light, as it pointed out an immediate remedy for the evil: the sight of the laurel therefore raises the hopes of Oedipus, and consequently heightens his disappointment afterwards. Sophocles, throughout this excellent piece,

ŒDIPUS.

We shall soon
Be satisfied: he comes.

SCENE II.

CREON, ŒDIPUS, PRIEST, CHORUS.

ŒDIPUS.

My dearest Creon,
O ! say, what answer bear'st thou from the god,
Or good, or ill ?

CREON.

Good, very good; for know,
The worst of ills, if rightly used, may prove
The means of happiness.

ŒDIPUS.

What says my friend?
This answer gives me nought to hope or fear.

CREON.

Shall we retire, or would you that I speak
In public here?

ŒDIPUS.

Before them all declare it;
Their woes sit heavier on me than my own.

CREON.

Then mark what I have heard: the god commands
That instant we drive forth the fatal cause

appears like a fine painter, whose judicious mixture and disposition of light and shade animates and enlivens the picture.

Of this dire pestilence, nor nourish here
Th' accursed monster.

ŒDIPUS.

Who? what monster? how
Remove it?

CREON.

Or by banishment, or death;
Life must be giv'n for life; for yet his blood
Rests on the city.

ŒDIPUS.

Whose? what means the god?

CREON.

O! king, before thee Laius rul'd o'er Thebes.

ŒDIPUS.

I know he did, though I did ne'er behold him.

CREON.

Laius was slain, and on his murderers,
So Phœbus says, we must have vengeance.

ŒDIPUS.

Where,
Where are the murd'rers? who shall trace the
guilt
Buried so long in silence?

CREON.

Here, he said,
E'en in this land: what's sought for may be found,
But truth unsearch'd for, seldom comes to light.

ŒDIPUS.

How did he fall, and where? at home, abroad,
Died he at Thebes, or in a foreign land?

CREON.

He left his palace, fame reports, to seek
Some oracle; since that, we ne'er beheld him.

ŒDIPUS.

But did no messenger return? not one
Of all his train, of whom we might enquire
Touching this murder?

CREON.

One, and one alone,
Came back, who, flying, 'scaped the general
slaughter;
But nothing, save one little circumstance,
Or knew, or e'er related.

ŒDIPUS.

What was that?
Much may be learn'd from that: a little dawn
Of light appearing may discover all.

CREON.

Laius, attack'd by robbers, and oppress'd
By numbers, fell; such is his tale.

ŒDIPUS.

Would they,
Would robbers do so desperate a deed,
Unbrib'd and unassisted?

CREON.

So indeed
Suspicion whisper'd then; but, Laius dead,
No friend was found to vindicate the wrong.

Oppress'd by numbers. This proves afterwards not to be true; for Œdipus was alone when he killed Laius; the servant notwithstanding might be supposed to have related the story in this manner, to excuse his own cowardice, and save the honour of his master. This falsehood was necessary to the carrying on of the plot, which would otherwise have been too soon unravelled.

ŒDIPUS.

But what strange cause could stop enquiry thus
Into the murder of a king ?

CREON.

The Sphynx,

Her dire ænigma kept our thoughts intent
On present ills, nor gave us time to search
The past mysterious deed.

ŒDIPUS.

Myself will try

Soon to unveil it ; thou, Apollo, well,
And well hast thou, my Creon, lent thy aid ;
Your Œdipus shall now perform his part ;
Yes, I will fight for Phœbus and my country,
And so I ought ; for not to friends alone
Or kindred owe I this, but to myself :
Who murder'd him perchance would murder me ;
His cause is mine : wherefore, my children, rise,
Take hence your suppliant boughs, and summon
here
The race of Cadmus, my assembled people ;
Nought shall be left untried : Apollo leads,
And we will rise to joy or sink for ever.

PRIEST.

Haste then, my sons ; for this we hither came ;
About it quiek, and may the god, who sent
This oracle, protect, defend, and save us. [*Exeunt.*

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

O ! thou, great oracle divine,
 Who didst to happy Thebes remove
 From Delphi's golden shrine,
 And in sweet sounds declare the will of Jove ;
 Daughter of hope, O ! soothe my soul to rest,
 And calm the rising tumult in my breast ;
 Look down, O ! Phœbus, on thy lov'd abode ;
 Speak, for thou know'st the dark decrees of fate,
 Our present and our future state,
 O ! Delian, be thou still our healing God !

ANTISTROPHE I.

Minerva, first on thee I call,
 Daughter of Jove, immortal maid,
 Low beneath thy feet we fall,
 O ! bring thy sister Dian to our aid ;
 Goddess of Thebes, from thy imperial throne
 Look with an eye of gentle pity down,
 And thou, far-shooting Phœbus, once the friend
 Of this unhappy, this devoted land,
 O ! now if ever let thy hand
 Once more be stretch'd to save and to defend !

O ! thou, great oracle, &c. The first intermede or song of the chorus is a solemn invocation of Apollo and other deities, intreating them to succour Thebes, and pathetically describing the dreadful effects of the pestilence. The whole is, in the original, nobly expressed, and naturally arising from the circumstances of the drama.

The will of Jove. The oracle of Apollo only interpreted the will of Jove, the great father and source of all. Absurd as the pagan theology was, we frequently find the ancients resolving all power into one supreme being, called, particularly in Sophocles, by the name of 'Theon, or the God.'

STROPHE II.

Great Thebes, my sons, is now no more,
 She falls and ne'er again shall rise,
 Nought can her health or strength restore,
 The mighty nation sinks, she droops, she dies :
 Stripp'd of her fruits behold the barren earth ;
 The half-form'd infant struggles for a birth ;
 The mother sinks unequal to her pain :
 Whilst quick as birds in airy circles fly,
 Or lightnings from an angry sky,
 Crowds press on crowds to Pluto's dark domain.

ANTISTROPHE 2.

Behold what heaps of wretches slain,
 Unbury'd, unlamented lie,
 Nor parents now nor friends remain
 To grace their death with pious obsequy ;
 The aged matron and the blooming wife,
 Clung to the altars, sue for added life ;
 With sighs and groans united pæans rise ;
 Re-echo'd still does great Apollo's name
 Their sorrows and their wants proclaim,
 Frequent to him ascends the sacrifice.

STROPHE III.

Haste then, Minerva, beauteous maid,
 Descend in this afflictive hour,
 Haste to thy dying people's aid,
 Drive hence this baneful, this destructive
 power !
 Who comes not arm'd with hostile sword or shield,
 Yet strews with many a corse th' ensanguin'd field ;
 To Amphitrite's wide-extending bed
 O ! drive him, goddess, from thy fav'rite land,

Or let him, by thy dread command,
Bury in Thracian waves his ignominious head.

ANTISTROPHE III.

Father of all, immortal Jove,
O ! now thy fiery terrors send ;
From thy dreadful stores above
Let lightnings blast him and let thunders rend ;
And thou, O ! Lydian king, thy aid impart ;
Send from thy golden bow, th' unerring dart ;
Smile, chaste Diana, on this lov'd abode,
Whilst Theban Bacchus joins the mad'ning throng,
O ! god of wine and mirth and song,
Now with thy torch destroy the base inglorious god.

{*Exeunt.*

With thy torch, &c. Bacchus is always described with torches ; probably in remembrance of his birth, as being born in flames, when his mother Semele was consumed by Jove's lightning. We read of 'the feast of torches,' dedicated to this god. Dacier imagines that the chorus invoke Bacchus with his torches, because wine and fire are the best preservatives against the plague : but this seems to be a mere allegorical and visionary refinement.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

ŒDIPUS, CHORUS, THE PEOPLE
ASSEMBLED.

ŒDIPUS.

Your pray'rs are heard ; and, if you will obey
Your king, and hearken to his words, you soon
Shall find relief ; myself will heal your woes :
I was a stranger to the dreadful deed,
A stranger ev'n to the report till now ;
And yet without some traces of the crime
I should not urge this matter ; therefore hear me ;
I speak to all the citizens of Thebes,
Myself a citizen ; observe me well :
If any know the murderer of Laius,
Let him reveal it : I command you all ;
But if restrained by dread of punishment
He hide the secret, let him fear no more ;
For nought but exile shall attend the crime
Whene'er confess'd ; if by a foreign hand
The horrid deed was done, who points him out
Commands our thanks, and meets a sure reward ;
But if there be who knows the murderer,
And yet conceals him from us, mark his fate
Which here I do pronounce : let none receive

Throughout my kingdom, none hold converse with him,

Nor offer pray'r, nor sprinkle o'er his head
 The sacred cup ; let him be driven from all,
 By all abandon'd, and by all accurs'd,
 For so the Delphic oracle declar'd ;
 And therefore to the gods I pay this duty
 And to the dead : O ! may the guilty wretch,
 Whether alone, or by his impious friends
 Assisted, he perform'd the horrid deed,
 Denied the common benefits of nature,
 Wear out a painful life ! and O ! if here,
 Within my palace, I conceal the traitor,
 On me and mine alight the vengeful curse !
 To you my people, I commit the care
 Of this important business ; 'tis my cause,
 The cause of heav'n, and your expiring country ;
 Ev'n if the god had nought declar'd, to leave
 This crime unexpiated were most ungrateful ;
 He was the best of kings, the best of men ;
 That sceptre now is mine which Laius bore ;
 His wife is mine ; so would his children be
 Did any live ; and therefore am I bound,
 Ev'n as he were my father, to revenge him :
 Yes, I will try to find this murderer,
 I owe it to the son of Labdacus,
 To Polydorus, Cadmus, and the race
 Of great Agenor : O ! if yet thre are,

Nor sprinkle o'er his head, &c. Before the sacrifice, it was customary for those, who partook of it, to wash their hands together in the lustral water, with which they were afterwards sprinkled by the priests, by way of purification : to be denied this, was always considered as a mark of guilt and infamy.

Who will not join me in the pious deed,
 From such may earth withhold her annual store,
 And barren be their bed, their life most wretched,
 And their death cruel as the pestilence
 That wastes our city ! but on you, my Thebans,
 Who wish us fair success, may justice smile
 Propitious, and the gods for ever bless.

CHORUS.

O ! king, thy imprecations unappall'd
 I hear, and join thee, guiltless of the crime
 Nor knowing who committed it ; the god
 Alone, who gave the oracle, must clear
 Its doubtful sense, and point out the offender.

ŒDIPUS.

'Tis true ; but who shall force the powers divine
 To speak their hidden purpose ?

CHORUS.

One thing more,
 If I might speak.

ŒDIPUS.

Say on, whate'er thy mind
 Shall dictate to thee.

CHORUS.

As among the gods
 All-knowing Phœbus, so to mortal men
 Doth sage Tiresias in foreknowledge sure
 Shine forth pre-eminent ; perchance his aid
 Might much avail us.

ŒDIPUS.

Creon did suggest
 The same expedient, and by his advice

By his advice. This circumstance is artfully thrown in by the poet, as it lays a foundation for the suspicions of Œdipus

'Twice have I sent for this Tiresias; much
I wonder that he comes not.

CHORUS.

'Tis most fitting
We do consult him; for the idle tales
Which rumour spreads are not to be regarded.

ŒDIPUS.

What are those tales? for nought should we despise.

CHORUS.

'Tis said, some trav'lers did attack the king.

ŒDIPUS.

It is; but still no proof appears.

CHORUS.

And yet,
If it be so, thy dreadful execration
Will force the guilty to confess.

ŒDIPUS.

O! no!

Who fears not to commit the crime will ne'er
Be frighted at the curse that follows it,

CHORUS.

Behold he comes, who will dicover all,
The holy prophet, see! they lead him hither;
He knows the truth and will reveal it to us.

against Creon, and prepares the spectators for the ensuing
quarrel between them.

SCENE II.

TIRESIAS, OEDIPUS, CHORUS.

OEDIPUS.

O ! sage Tiresias, thou who knowest all
That can be known, the things of heaven above
And earth below, whose mental eye beholds,
Blind as thou art, the state of dying Thebes,
And weeps her fate, to thee we look for aid,
On thee alone for safety we depend :
This answer, which perchance thou hast not heard,
Apollo gave ; the plague, he said, should cease,
When those who murder'd Laius were discover'd,
And paid the forfeit of their crime by death,
Or banishment : Oh ! do not then conceal
Aught that thy art prophetic from the flight
Of birds or other omens may disclose ;
O ! save thyself, save this afflicted city,
Save Oedipus, avenge the guiltless dead
From this pollution ! thou art all our hope ;
Remember 'tis the privilege of man,
His noblest function, to assist the wretched.

TIRESIAS.

Alas ! what misery it is to know,

Blind as thou art. The ancients give us various accounts of the cause of Tiresias' blindness. Ovid, who is perhaps the best poetical authority, tells us, that Tiresias, being appointed by Jupiter and Juno to decide a difference between them, gave his opinion in favour of the former ; upon which, the enraged Juno deprived him of his sight : and Jupiter, to make him amends, bestowed on him the gift of prophecy.

When knowledge is thus fatal ! O ! Tiresias,
Thou art undone ! would I had never come !

ŒDIPUS.

What say'st thou ? whence this strange dejection ?
speak.

TIRESIAS.

Let me begone : 'twere better for us both
That I retire in silence ; be advised.

ŒDIPUS.

It is ingratitude to Thebes, who bore
And cherish'd thee, it is unjust to all,
To hide the will of heaven.

TIRESIAS.

'Tis rash in thee
To ask, and rash I fear will prove my answer.

CHORUS.

O ! do not, by the gods, conceal it from us,
Suppliant we all request, we all conjure thee.

TIRESIAS.

You know not what you ask ; I'll not unveil
Your mis'ries to you.

ŒDIPUS.

Know'st thou then our fate,
And wilt not tell it ? mean st thou to betray
Thy country and thy king ?

TIRESIAS.

I would not make
Myself and thee unhappy ; why thus blame
My tender care, nor listen to my caution ?

ŒDIPUS.

Wretch as thou art, thou would'st provoke a stone,
Inflexible and cruel, still implor'd
And still refusing.

TIRESIAS.

Thou condemn'st my warmth,
Forgetful of thy own.

ŒDIPUS.

Who would not rage
To see an injur'd people treated thus
With vile contempt?

TIRESIAS.

What is decreed by heaven
Must come to pass, though I reveal it not.

ŒDIPUS.

Still 'tis thy duty to inform us of it.

TIRESIAS.

I'll speak no more, not though thine anger swell
Ea'n to its utmost.

ŒDIPUS.

Nor will I be silent.
I tell thee once for all thou wert thyself
Accomplice in this deed ; nay more, I think,
But for thy blindness, would'st with thy own hand
Have done it too..

TIRESIAS.

'Tis well, now hear Tiresias ;
The sentence, which thou didst thyself proclaim,
Falls on thyself ; henceforth shall never man
Hold converse with thee, for thou art accurs'd,
The guilty cause of all this city's woes.

ŒDIPUS.

Audacious traitor, think'st thou to escape
The hand of vengeance ?

TIRESIAS.

Yes, I fear thee not ;
For truth is stronger than a tyrant's arm.

ŒDIPUS.

Whence didst thou learn this ? was it from thy art ?
TIRESIAS.

I learn'd it from thyself ; thou didst compel me
To speak, unwilling as I was.

ŒDIPUS.

Once more

Repeat it then, that I may know my fate
More plainly still.

TIRESIAS.

Is it not plain already ?
Or mean'st thou but to tempt me ?

ŒDIPUS.

No ; but say,

Speak it again.

TIRESIAS.

Again then I declare
Thou art thyself the murd'rer whom thou seek'st.

ŒDIPUS.

A second time thou shalt not pass unpunish'd.

TIRESIAS.

What would'st thou say, if I should tell thee all ?

ŒDIPUS.

Say what thou wilt ! for all is false.

TIRESIAS.

Know then,
That Œdipus, in shameful bonds united
With those he loves, unconscious of his guilt,
Is yet most guilty.

ŒDIPUS.

Dar'st thou utter more,
And hope for pardon ?

TIRESIAS.

Yes, if there be strength

In sacred truth.

OEDIPUS.

But truth dwells not in thee ;
Thy body and thy mind are dark alike,
For both are blind ; thy ev'ry sense is lost.

TIRESIAS.

Thou dost upbraid me with the loss of that
For which thyself e'er long shalt meet reproach
From ev'ry tongue.

OEDIPUS,

Thou blind and impious traitor !
Thy darkness is thy safeguard, or this hour
Had been thy last.

TIRESIAS.

It is not in my fate
To fall by thee ; Apollo guards his priest.

OEDIPUS.

Was this the tale of Creon, or thy own ?

TIRESIAS.

Creon is guiltless, and the crime is thine.

OEDIPUS.

O ! riches, power, dominion, and thou far
Above them all, the best of human blessings,
Excelling wisdom, how doth envy love
To follow and oppress you ! this fair kingdom,
Which by the nation's choice, and not my own,
I here possess, Creon, my faithful friend,
For such I thought him once, would now wrest from
me,

And has suborn'd this vile impostor here,
This wand'ring hypocrite, of sharpest sight

When interest prompts, but ignorant and blind
 When fools consult him ; tell me, prophet, where
 Was all thy art, when the abhorred Sphynx
 Alarm'd our city ? wherefore did not then
 Thy wisdom save us ? then the man divine
 Was wanting ; but thy birds refus'd their omens,
 Thy god was silent ; then came Œdipus,
 This poor, unlearned, uninstructed sage ;
 Who not from birds uncertain omens drew,
 But by his own sagacious mind explor'd
 The hidden mystery ; and now thou com'st
 To cast me from the throne my wisdom gain'd,
 And share with Creon my divided empire :
 But you should both lament your ill-got power,
 You and your bold compeer ; for thee, this moment,
 But that I bear respect unto thy age,
 I'd make thee rue thy execrable purpose.

CHORUS.

You both are angry, therefore both to blame ;
 Much rather should you join, with friendly zeal
 And mutual ardour, to explore the will
 Of all-deciding Heaven.

TIRESIAS.

What though thou rul'st
 O'er Thebes despotic, we are equal here ;
 I am Apollo's subject, and not thine ;
 Nor want I Creon to protect me. No ;
 I tell thee, king, this blind Tiresias tells thee,
 Seeing thou see'st not, know'st not where thou art,
 What, or with whom : canst thou inform me who
 Thy parents are, and what thy horrid crimes
 'Gainst thy own race, the living and the dead ?
 A father's and a mother's curse attend thee ;

Soon shall their Furies drive thee from the land,
And leave thee dark like me ; what mountain then,
Or conscious shore, shall not return the groans
Of Oedipus, and echo to his woes ?

When thou shalt look on the detested bed,
And in that haven, where thou hop'st to rest,
Shalt meet with storm and tempest ; then what ills
Shall fall on thee and thine ! now vent thy rage
On old Tiresias, and the guiltless Creon ;
We shall be soon aveng'd, for ne'er did Heaven
Cut off a wretch so base, so vile as thou art.

OEDIPUS.

Must I bear this from thee ? away, begone,
Home, villain, home.

TIRESIAS.

I did not come to thee

Unsent for.

OEDIPUS.

Had I thought thou would'st have thus
Insulted me, I had not call'd thee hither.

TIRESIAS.

Perhaps thou hold'st Tiresias as a fool,
And madman ; but thy parents thought me wise.

OEDIPUS.

My parents, said'st thou ? speak, who were my pa-
rents ?

TIRESIAS.

This day, that gives thee life, shall give thee death.

What mountain then. In the original, it is, what Cithæron ? Cithæron was the mountain where Oedipus was exposed when an infant ; this, therefore, has a remarkable propriety, but could not be expressed in the translation.

This day, &c. That is, "this day, which shall discover

ŒDIPUS.

Still dark, and still perplexing are the words
Thou utter'st.

TIRESIAS.

"Tis thy business to unriddle,
And therefore thou canst best interpret them.

ŒDIPUS.

Thou dost reproach me for my virtues.

TIRESIAS.

They,
And thy good fortune, have undone thee.

ŒDIPUS.

Since
I sav'd the city, I'm content.

TIRESIAS.

Farewell.
Boy, lead me hence.

ŒDIPUS.

Away with him, for here
His presence but disturbs us ; being gone,
We shall be happier.

TIRESIAS.

Œdipus, I go,

who thy parents are that gave thee life, shall also, by that discovery, cause thy death, when thou shalt be found the murderer of thy father :" he tells him afterwards, that his virtues had undone him, which was literally true, as his wisdom in expounding the riddle of the Sphynx, and his good fortune in being saved by the shepherd in his infancy, gave him the opportunity of committing those crimes which he could otherwise never have been guilty of. The affected obscurity of Tiresias' predictions keeps the spectators in a proper suspense, and, at the same time, throws an air of solemnity over the scene, which renders it more interesting.

But first inform thee, for I fear thee not,
 Wherefore I came ; know, then, I came to tell thee,
 The man thou seek'st, the man on whom thou
 pour'dst
 Thy execrations, e'en the murderer
 Of Laius, now is here ; a seeming stranger,
 And yet a Theban ; he shall suffer soon
 For all his crimes ; from light and affluence driven
 To penury and darkness, poor and blind,
 Prop'd on his staff, and from his native land
 Expell'd ; I see him in a foreign clime
 A helpless wand'rer ; to his sons at once,
 A father, and a brother ; child, and husband
 Of her from whom he sprang : adulterous,
 Incestuous parricide, now fare thee well ;
 Go, learn the truth, and if it be not so,
 Say I have ne'er deserv'd the name of prophet.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

When will the guilty wretch appear,
 Whom Delphi's sacred oracle demands ;
 Author of crimes too black for mortal ear,
 Dipping in royal blood his sacrilegious hands ?

When will the guilty, &c. This is the second intermede, or song of the chorus, who, divided between hope and fear, concerning the murder of Laius, express their sentiments on this occasion : their respect and veneration for the character of Tiresias, inclines them to believe him ; whilst, on the other hand, their regard for Ædipus would persuade them to question the prophet's veracity ; they determine therefore in favour of their sovereign, and conclude him innocent.

Swift as the storm by rapid whirlwinds driv'n,
 Quick let him fly th' impending wrath of heaven ;
 For lo ! the angry son of Jove,
 Arm'd with red lightnings from above,
 Pursues the murd'rer with immortal hate,
 And round him spreads the snares of unrelenting
 fate.

ANTISTROPHE I.

From steep Parnassus' rocky cave,
 Cover'd with snow, came forth the dread com-
 mand ;
 Apollo thence his sacred mandate gave,
 To search the man of blood through ev'ry land :
 Silent, and sad, the weary wand'rer roves,
 O'er pathless rocks, and solitary groves,
 Hoping to 'scape the wrath divine,
 Denounc'd from great Apollo's shrine ;
 Vain hopes to 'scape the fate by heaven decreed ;
 For vengeance hovers still o'er his devoted head.

STROPHE II.

Tiresias, fam'd for wisdom's lore,
 Hath dreadful ills to Œdipus divin'd ;
 And as his words mysterious I explore,
 Unnumber'd doubts perplex my anxious mind,
 Now rais'd by hope, and now with fears oppress'd,
 Sorrow and joy alternate fill my breast :
 How should these hapless kings be foes,
 When never strife between them rose !
 Or why should Laius, slain by hands unknown,
 Bring foul disgrace on Polybus' unhappy son ?

Polybus' unhappy son. This circumstance pleads strongly in favour of Œdipus, who is still supposed to be the son of Polybus; it was not therefore probable, that he should mur-

ANTISTROPHE II.

From Phœbus and all-seeing Jove
 Nought can be hid of actions here below ;
 But earthly prophets may deceitful prove,
 And little more than other mortals know :
 Though much in wisdom man doth man excel,
 In all that's human error still must dwell :

Could he commit the bloody deed,

Who from the Sphynx our city freed ?

O no ! he never shed the guiltless blood,
 The Sphynx declares him wise, and innocent, and
 good.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

CREON, CHORUS.

CREON.

O ! Citizens, with grief I hear your king
 Hath blasted the fair fame of guiltless Creon !
 And most unjustly brands me with a crime
 My soul abhors : whilst desolation spreads
 On ev'ry side, and universal ruin

der a man who had never injured him, and with whom he could have no connection.

Hangs o'er the land, if I in word or deed
 Could join to swell the woes of hapless Thebes,
 I were unworthy, nay I would not wish
 To live another day : alas, my friends,
 Thus to be deem'd a traitor to my country,
 To you, my fellow-citizens, to all
 That hear me, O ! 'tis infamy and shame ;
 I cannot, will not bear it.

CHORUS.

'Twas th' effect
 Of sudden anger only, what he said
 But could not think.

CREON.

Who told him I suborn'd
 The prophet to speak falsely ? what could raise
 This vile suspicion ?

CHORUS.

Such he had, but whence.
 I know not.

CREON.

Talk'd he thus with firm composure
 And confidence of mind ?

CHORUS.

I cannot say ;
 'Tis not for me to know the thoughts of kings,
 Or judge their actions ; but behold, he comes.

SCENE II.

ŒDIPUS, CREON, CHORUS.

ŒDIPUS.

Ha! Creon here? and dar'st thou thus approach
 My palace, thou who would'st have murder'd me,
 And ta'en my kingdom? by the gods I ask thee,
 Answer me, traitor, did'st thou think me fool,
 Or coward, that I could not see thy arts,
 Or had not strength to vanquish them? what mad-
 ness,

What strange infatuation led thee on,
 Without or force, or friends, to grasp at empire,
 Which only their united force can give?
 What wert thou doing?

CREON.

Hear what I shall answer,
 Then judge impartial.

ŒDIPUS.

Thou can'st talk it well,
 But I shall ne'er attend to thee; thy guilt
 Is plain; thou art my deadliest foe.

CREON.

But hear
 What I shall urge.

ŒDIPUS.

Say not, thou'rt innocent.

CREON.

If self-opinion void of reason seem
 Conviction to thee, know thou err'st most grossly.

ŒDIPUS.

And thou more grossly, if thou think'st to pass
Unpunish'd for this injury to thy friend.

CREON.

I should not, were I guilty ; but what crime
Have I committed ? tell me.

ŒDIPUS.

Wert not thou
The man who urg'd me to require the aid
Of your all-knowing prophet ?

CREON.

True, I was ;
I did persuade you ; so I would again.

ŒDIPUS.

How long is it since Laius—

CREON.

Laius ? what ?

ŒDIPUS.

Since Laius fell by hands unknown ?

CREON.

A long,
Long tract of years.

ŒDIPUS.

Was this Tiresias then
A prophet ?

CREON.

Ay ! in wisdom and in fame
As now excelling.

ŒDIPUS.

Did he then say aught
Concerning me ?

CREON.

I never heard he did.

ŒDIPUS.

Touching this murder, did you ne'er inquire
Who were the authors?

CREON.

Doubtless; but in vain.

ŒDIPUS.

Why did not this same prophet, then, inform you?

CREON.

I know not that, and when I'm ignorant
I'm always silent.

ŒDIPUS.

What concerns thyself

At least thou know'st, and therefore should'st de-
clare it.

CREON.

What is it? Speak; and, if 'tis in my power,
I'll answer thee.

ŒDIPUS.

Thou know'st, if this Tiresias
Had not combin'd with thee, he would not thus
Accuse me, as the murderer of Laius.

CREON.

What he declares, thou best can'st tell: of me
What thou requir'st, myself am yet to learn.

ŒDIPUS.

Go, learn it then; but ne'er shalt thou discover,
That Œdipus is guilty.

CREON.

Art not thou

My sister's husband?

ŒDIPUS.

Granted.

CREON.

Join'd with her,
Thou rul'st o'er Thebes.

ŒDIPUS.

'Tis true, and all she asks
Most freely do I give her.

CREON.

Is not Creon
In honour next to you ?

ŒDIPUS.

Thou art ; and therefore
The more ungrateful.

CREON.

Hear what I shall plead,
And thou wilt never think so : tell me, prince,
Is there a man, who would prefer a throne
With all its dangers to an equal rank
In peace and safety ? I am not of those
Who choose the name of king before the power ;
Fools only make such wishes : I have all
From thee, and fearless I enjoy it all :
Had I the sceptre, often must I act
Against my will ; know then, I am not yet
So void of sense and reason, as to quit
A real 'vantage for a seeming good :
Am I not happy, am I not rever'd,
Embrac'd, and lov'd by all ? to me they come

Join'd with her, &c. Creon, as brother to the queen, and presumptive heir to the crown after the death of Laius, had reason to think himself aggrieved by the marriage of Œdipus, and his succession to the kingdom of Thebes ; a circumstance which, though unobserved by the commentators, accounts in the most probable manner for the strong suspicions of the one, and the warm resentment of the other.

Who want thy favour, and by me acquire it :
 What then should Creon wish for ; shall he leave
 All this for empire ? Bad desires corrupt
 The fairest mind : I never entertain'd
 A thought so vile, nor would I lend my aid
 To forward such base purposes : but go
 To Delphos, ask the sacred oracle
 If I have spoke the truth ; if there you find
 That with the prophet I conspir'd, destroy
 The guilty Creon ; not thy voice alone
 Shall then condemn me, for myself will join
 In the just sentence ; but accuse me not
 On weak suspicion's most uncertain test ;
 Justice would never call the wicked good,
 Or brand fair virtue with the name of vice
 Unmerited : to cast away a friend
 Faithful and just, is to deprive ourselves
 Of life and being, which we hold most dear :
 But time, and time alone, revealeth all ;
 That only shows the good man's excellence ;
 A day sufficeth to unmask the wicked.

CHORUS.

O ! king, his caution merits your regard ;
 Who judge in haste do seldom judge aright.

ŒDIPUS.

When they are quick who plot against my life,
 'Tis fit I should be quick in my defence ;
 If I am tame and silent, all they wish
 Will soon be done, and Œdipus must fall.

CREON.

What would'st thou have ? my banishment ?

ŒDIPUS.

Thy death.

CREON.

But first inform me wherefore I should die.

ŒDIPUS.

Dost thou rebel, then? wilt thou not submit?

CREON.

Not when I see thee thus deceiv'd.

ŒDIPUS.

'Tis fit

I should defend my own.

CREON.

And so should I.

ŒDIPUS.

Thou art a traitor.

CREON.

What if it should prove

I am not so.

ŒDIPUS.

A king must be obey'd.

CREON.

Not if his orders are unjust.

ŒDIPUS.

O! Thebes!

O! Citizens!

CREON.

I too can call on Thebes;

She is my country.

CHORUS.

O! no more, my lords,
For see, Jocasta comes in happiest hour
To end your contest.

SCENE III.

JOCASTA, CREON, OEDIPUS, CHORUS.

JOCASTA.

Whence this sudden tumult?

O ! princes, is this well ? at such a time
 With idle broils to multiply the woes
 Of wretched Thebes ? Home, home, for shame, nor
 thus
 With private quarrels swell the public ruin.

CREON.

Sister, thy husband hath most basely us'd me ;
 He threatens me with banishment or death.

OEDIPUS.

I do confess it ; for he did conspire
 With vile and wicked arts against my life.

CREON.

O ! may I never prosper, but accurs'd,
 Unpitied, perish if I ever did.

JOCASTA.

Believe him, Oedipus, revere the gods
 Whom he attests, if thou dost love Jocasta ;
 Thy subjects beg it of thee.

CHORUS.

Hear, O ! king ;

Consider, we intreat thee.

OEDIPUS.

What wouldst have ?

Think you I'll e'er submit to him ?

CHORUS.

Revere

His character, his oath, both pleading for him.

ŒDIPUS.

But know you what you ask ?

CHORUS.

We do.

ŒDIPUS.

What is it ?

CHORUS.

We ask thee to believe a guiltless friend,
 Nor cast him forth dishonour'd thus, on slight
 Suspicion's weak surmise.

ŒDIPUS.

Requesting this,
 You do request my banishment, or death.

CHORUS.

No ; by yon leader of the heavenly host,
 Th' immortal sun, I had not such a thought ;
 I only felt for Thebes's distressful state,
 And would not have it by domestic strife
 Embitter'd thus.

ŒDIPUS.

Why, let him then depart ;
 If Œdipus must die, or leave his country,
 For shameful exile, be it so ; I yield
 To thy request, not his ; for hateful still
 Shall Creon ever be.

CREON.

Thy stubborn soul
 Bends with reluctance, and when anger fires it
 Is terrible ; but natures form'd like thine
 Are their own punishment.

ŒDIPUS.

Wilt thou not hence ?

Wilt not be gone ?

CREON.

I go ; thou know'st me not ;

But these will do me justice.

[Exit.]

SCENE IV.

JOCASTA, ŒDIPUS, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Princess, now

Persuade him to retire.

JOCASTA.

First, let me know

The cause of this dissension.

CHORUS.

From reports

Uncertain, and suspicions most injurious,
The quarrel rose.

JOCASTA.

Was th' accusation mutual ?

CHORUS.

It was.

JOCASTA.

What follow'd then ?

CHORUS.

Ask me no more ;

Enough's already known ; we'll not repeat
The woes of hapless Thebes.

ŒDIPUS.

You all are blind,
 Insensible, unjust ; you love me not,
 Yet boast your piety.

CHORUS.

I said before,
 Again I say, that not to love my king
 E'en as myself would mark me for the worst
 Of men ; for thou did'st save expiring Thebes :
 O ! rise once more, protect, preserve thy country !

JOCASTA.

O ! king, inform me, whence this strange dissension ?

ŒDIPUS.

I'll tell thee, my Jocasta, for thou know'st
 The love I bear thee, what this wicked Creon
 Did artfully devise against me.

JOCASTA.

Speak it,

If he indeed be guilty.

ŒDIPUS.

Creon says

That I did murder Laius.

JOCASTA.

Spake he this,
 As knowing it himself, or from another ?

ŒDIPUS.

He had suborn'd that evil-working priest ;
 And sharpens ev'ry tongue against his king.

JOCASTA.

Let not a fear perplex thee, Œdipus :
 Mortals know nothing of futurity,
 And these prophetic seers are all impostors ;

I'll prove it to thee : know then, Laius once,
 Not from Apollo, but his priests, receiv'd
 An oracle, which said, it was decreed
 He should be slain by his own son, the offspring
 Of Laius and Jocasta ; yet he fell
 By strangers, murdered, for so fame reports,
 By robbers in the place where three ways meet :
 A son was born, but e'er three days had past,
 The infant's feet were bor'd ; a servant took
 And left him on the pathless mountain's top,
 To perish there : thus Phœbus ne'er decreed
 That he should kill his father, or that Laius,
 Which much he fear'd, should by his son be slain :
 Such is the truth of oracles ; henceforth
 Regard them not ; what heaven would have us know,
 It can with ease unfold, and will reveal it.

ŒDIPUS.

What thou hast said, Jocasta, much disturbs me ;
 I tremble at it.

JOCASTA.

Wherfore should'st thou fear ?

ŒDIPUS.

Methought I heard thee say, Laius was slain

What thou hast said, &c. The conduct of the fable, throughout this play, cannot be sufficiently admired ; every thing advanced by Jocasta, to destroy the force of the oracle, tends to confirm it ; and every argument, which she brings to remove the fears of Œdipus, increases them : the whole visibly calculated to impress this moral and religious truth on the minds of the audience, viz. that whatever is decreed by divine Providence must inevitably come to pass ; and that all the means, which are made use of by men to counteract its designs, do, in the end, only promote and forward the accomplishment of them : nothing can be more interesting than the following scene between Œdipus and Jocasta.

Where three ways meet.

JOCASTA.

'Twas so reported then,
And is so still.

ŒDIPUS.

Where happen'd the misfortune?

JOCASTA.

In Phocis, where the roads unite that lead
To Delphi and to Daulia.

ŒDIPUS.

How long since?

JOCASTA.

A little time ere you began to reign
O'er Thebes, we heard it.

ŒDIPUS.

O ! almighty Jove !

What wilt thou do with me ?

JOCASTA.

Why talk'st thou thus ?

ŒDIPUS.

Ask me no more ; but tell me of this Laius,
What was his age, and stature ?

JOCASTA.

He was tall ;

His hairs just turning to the silver hue ;
His form not much unlike thy own.

ŒDIPUS.

O ! me !

Sure I have call'd down curses on myself
Unknowing.

JOCASTA.

Ha ! what say'st thou, Œdipus ?
I tremble whilst I look on thee.

ŒDIPUS.

O ! much

I fear, the prophet saw too well ; but say,
One thing will make it clear.

JOCASTA.

I dread to hear it ;
Yet speak, and I will tell thee.

ŒDIPUS.

Went he forth
With few attendants, or a numerous train,
In kingly pomp ?

JOCASTA.

They were but five in all ;
The herald with them ; but one chariot there,
Which carried Laius.

ŒDIPUS.

O ! 'tis but too plain :
Who brought the news ?

JOCASTA.

A servant, who alone
Escap'd with life.

ŒDIPUS.

That servant, is he here ?

JOCASTA.

O ! no ! his master slain, when he return'd
And saw thee on the throne of Thebes, with prayer
Most earnest he beseech'd me to dismiss him,
That he might leave this city, where he wish'd
No longer to be seen, but to retire,
And feed my flocks ; I granted his request ;
For that and more his honest services
Had merited.

ŒDIPUS.

I beg he may be sent for
Immediately.

JOCASTA.

He shall ; but wherefore is it ?

ŒDIPUS.

I fear thou'st said too much, and therefore wish
To see him.

JOCASTA.

He shall come ; but, O ! my lord,
Am I not worthy to be told the cause
Of this distress ?

ŒDIPUS.

Thou art, and I will tell thee ;
Thou art my hope ; to whom should I impart
My sorrows, but to thee ? know then, Jocasta,
I am the son of Polybus, who reigns
At Corinth, and the Dorian Merope
His queen ; there long I held the foremost rank,
Honour'd and happy, when a strange event,
(For strange it was, though little meriting
The deep concern I felt) alarm'd me much ;
A drunken rev'ller at a feast proclaim'd
That I was only the supposed son
Of Corinth's king ; searee could I bear that day
The vile reproach ; the next, I sought my parents,
And ask'd of them the truth ; they too, enrag'd,
Resented much the base indignity ;
I lik'd their tender warmth, but still I felt
A secret anguish, and unknown to them
Sought out the Pythian oracle ; in vain ;
Touching my parents, nothing could I learn ;
But dreadful were the mis'ries it denoune'd

Against me ; 'twas my fate, Apollo said,
To wed my mother, to produce a race
Accursed and abhor'd ; and last, to slay
My father who begat me ; sad decree !
Lest I should e'er fulfil the dire prediction,
Instant I fled from Corinth, by the stars
Guiding my hapless journey to the place
Where thou report'st this wretched king was slain ;
But I will tell thee the whole truth ; at length
I came to where the three ways meet ; when, lo !
A herald, with another man like him
Whom thou describ'st, and in a chariot, meet me ;
Both strove with violence to drive me back ;
Enrag'd, I struck the charioteer, when strait,
As I advanc'd, the old man saw, and twice
Smote me o'th' head, but dearly soon repaid
The insult on me ; from his chariot roll'd
Prone on the earth, beneath my staff he fell,
And instantly expir'd : th' attendant train
All shar'd his fate : if this unhappy stranger
And Laius be the same, lives there a wretch
So curs'd, so hateful to the gods as I am ?
Nor citizen, nor alien must receive,
Or converse, or communion hold with me,
But drive me forth with infamy and shame ;
The dreadful curse pronounc'd by my own lips
Shall soon o'ertake me : I have stain'd the bed
Of him whom I had murder'd ; am I then
Aught but pollution ? if I fly from hence,
The bed of incest meets me, and I go
To slay my father Polybus, the best,
The tend'rest parent ; this must be the work
Of some malignant power : ye righteous gods,

Let me not see that day, but rest in death,
Rather than suffer such calamity !

CHORUS.

O ! king, we pity thy distress ; but wait
With patience his arrival, and despair not.

ŒDIPUS.

That shepherd is my only hope : Jocasta,
Would he were here !

JOCASTA.

Suppose he were ? what then ?
What would'st thou do ?

ŒDIPUS.

I'll tell thee ; if he says
The same as thou dost, I am safe, and guiltless.

JOCASTA.

What said I then ?

ŒDIPUS.

Thou said'st he did report
Laius was slain by robbers ; if 'tis true
He fell by numbers, I am innocent,
For I was unattended ; if but one
Attack'd and slew him, doubtless I am he.

JOCASTA.

Be satisfied it must be as he first
Reported it ! he cannot change the tale ;
Not I alone, but the whole city heard it :
Or grant he should, the oracle was ne'er
Fulfill'd ; for Phœbus said, Jocasta's son
Should slay his father ; that could never be ;

His arrival. The arrival of the shepherd mentioned by Jocasta, whom we shall find of signal service in keeping up the attention of the spectators and protracting the catastrophe.

For, O ! Jocasta's son long since is dead ;
 He could not murder Laius ; therefore, never
 Will I attend to prophecies again.

ŒDIPUS.

Right, my Jocasta ; but, I beg thee, send
 And fetch this shepherd ; do not fail.

JOCASTA.

I will
 This moment ; come, my lord, let us go in ;
 I will do nothing but what pleases thee. [Exeunt.

SCENE V.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Grant me henceforth, ye powers divine,
 In virtue's purest paths to tread !
 In ev'ry word, in ev'ry deed,
 May sanctity of manners ever shine !
 Obedient to the laws of Jove,
 The laws descended from above,
 Which, not like those by feeble mortals giv'n,
 Buried in dark oblivion lie,
 Or worn by time decay, and die,
 But bloom eternal like their native heaven !

Grant me henceforth, &c. This is the third intermede or song of the Chorus ; who, shocked at the impiety of Jocasta in questioning the truth of the oracle, agreeably to their office and character, declare their abhorrence of such presumption, and deprecate the wrath of the gods, which must inevitably fall on the delinquent : the whole is full of noble and religious sentiments adapted to the subject.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Pride first gave birth to tyranny :
 That hateful vice, insulting pride,
 When, ev'ry human power defied,
 She lifts to glory's height her votary ;
 Soon stumbling from her tott'ring throne,
 She throws the wretched victim down :
 But may the god indulgent hear my prayer,
 That god whom humbly I adore,
 O ! may he smile on Thebes once more,
 And take it's wretched monarch to his care !

STROPHE II.

Perish the impious and profane,
 Who, void of reverential fear,
 Nor justice, nor the laws revere,
 Who leave their god for pleasure or for gain !
 Who swell by fraud their ill-got store,
 Who rob the wretched and the poor !
 If vice unpunish'd virtue's meed obtain,
 Who shall refrain th' impetuous soul ?
 The rebel passions who controul ?
 Or wherefore do I lead this choral train ?

ANTISTROPHE II.

No more to Delphi's sacred shrine
 Need we with incense now repair,
 No more shall Phocis hear our prayer,
 Nor fair Olympia see her rites divine ;
 If oracles no longer prove

No more to Delphi's, &c. It was usual to depute certain priests from every temple to carry offerings to the temple of Apollo, and to assist at the assemblies of Greece, particularly at Olympia, or Pisa, a city of Elis in the Peloponnesus, famous for the Olympic games, and the temple of Jupiter.

The power of Phœbus and of Jove :
Great lord of all, from thy eternal throne
Behold, how impious men defame
Thy lov'd Apollo's honour'd name ;
O ! guard his rights, and vindicate thy own.

[*Exeunt.*

A C T I V.

SCENE I.

JOCASTA, CHORUS.

JOCASTA.

Sages and rulers of the land, I come
To seek the altars of the gods, and there
With incense and oblations to appease
Offended heaven : my Œdipus, alas !

Sages and rulers, &c. The title of Anaktes, or rulers, with which Jocasta salutes the Chorus, plainly points out to us the age and dignity of those who composed it, being only given to the guardians and defenders of their country. Jocasta, we see, alarmed at the despondency and miserable condition of Œdipus, enters with boughs of supplication in her hand, and is going with great humility to the temples of the gods, whose oracles she had just before treated with contempt : so natural is the transition from open impiety and presumption to servile fears, and enthusiastic superstition.

No longer wise and prudent, as you all
 Remember once he was, with present things
 Compares the past, nor judges like himself ;
 Unnumber'd cares perplex his anxious mind,
 And every tale awakes new terrors in him ;
 Vain is my counsel, for he hears me not.
 First then, to thee, O ! Phœbus, for thou still
 Art near to help the wretched, we appeal ;
 And suppliant beg thee now to grant thy aid
 Propitious ; deep is our distress ; for, O !
 We see our pilot sinking at the helm,
 And much already fear the vessel lost.

SCENE II.

SHEPHERD FROM CORINTH, JOCASTA,
 CHORUS.

SHEPHERD.

Can you instruct me, strangers, which way lies
 The palace of king Œdipus ; himself
 I would most gladly see ; can you inform me ?

CHORUS.

This is the palace ; he is now within ;
 Thou see'st his queen before thee.

SHEPHERD.

Ever blest
 And happy with the happy may'st thou live.

JOCASTA.

Stranger, the same good wish to thee, for well
 Thy words deserve it ; but say, wherefore com'st
 thou,
 And what's thy news ?

SHEPHERD.

To thee, and to thy husband,
Pleasure, and joy.

JOCASTA.

What pleasure? and whence art thou?

SHEPHERD.

From Corinth: to be brief, I bring thee tidings
Of good and evil.

JOCASTA.

Ha! what mean thy words

Ambiguous?

SHEPHERD.

Know then, if report say true,
The Isthmian people will choose Oedipus
Their sov'reign.

JOCASTA.

Is not Polybus their king?

SHEPHERD.

No; Polybus is dead.

JOCASTA.

What say'st thou? dead?

SHEPHERD.

If I speak falsely, may death seize on me!

JOCASTA, to one of her attendants.

Why fly'st thou not to tell thy master? hence!
What are you now, you oracles divine?
Where is your truth? the fearful Oedipus,
From Corinth fled, lest he should slay the king,
This Polybus, who perish'd, not by him,
But by the hand of heaven.

The Isthmian people. The people of Corinth; so called
from the famous Isthmus there.

SCENE III.

ŒDIPUS, JOCASTA, SHEPHERD, CHORUS.

ŒDIPUS.

My dear Jocasta,
Why hast thou call'd me hither?

JOCASTA.

Hear this man,
And when thou hear'st him, mark what faith is
due
To your revered oracles.

ŒDIPUS.

Who is he?
And what doth he report?

JOCASTA.

He comes from Corinth;
And says, thy father Polybus is dead.

ŒDIPUS.

What say'st thou, stranger? speak to me, O! speak.

SHEPHERD.

If touching this thou first desir'st my answer;
Know, he is dead.

ŒDIPUS.

How died he? say, by treason,
Or some disease?

SHEPHERD.

Alas! a little force
Will lay to rest the weary limbs of age.

ŒDIPUS.

Distemper then did kill him?

SHEPHERD.

That in part,

And part a length of years that wore him down.

ŒDIPUS.

Now, my Jocasta, who shall henceforth trust
To procheicies, and seers, and clam'rous birds
With their vain omens: they who had decreed .
That I should kill my father? he, thou seest,
Beneath the earth lies buried, whilst I live
In safety here, and guiltless of his blood :
Unless perhaps sorrow for loss of me
Shorten'd his days, thus only could I kill -
My father; but he's gone, and to the shades
Hath carried with him those vain oracles
Of fancied ills, no longer worth my care.

JOCASTA.

Did I not say it would be thus?

ŒDIPUS.

Thou didst;

But I was full of fears.

JOCASTA.

Henceforth, no more

Indulge them.

ŒDIPUS.

But my mother's bed—that still
Must be avoided: I must fly from that.

JOCASTA.

Why should man fear, whom chance, and chance
alone

Doth ever rule? Foreknowledge all is vain,
And can determine nothing; therefore best
It is to live as fancy leads, at large,
Uncurb'd, and only subject to our will.

Fear not thy mother's bed : oftentimes in dreams
Have men committed incest ; but his life
Will ever be most happy, who contemns
Such idle phantoms.

ŒDIPUS.

Thou wert right, Jocasta,
Did not my mother live ; but as it is,
Spite of thy words, I must be anxious still.

JOCASTA.

Think on thy father's death, it is a light
To guide thee here.

ŒDIPUS.

It is so ; yet I fear
Whilst she survives him.

SHEPHERD.

Who is it you mean ?
What woman fear you ?

ŒDIPUS.

Merope, the wife
Of Polybus.

SHEPHERD.

And wherefore fear you her ?

ŒDIPUS.

Know, stranger, a most dreadful oracle
Concerning her affrights me.

SHEPHERD.

May I know it,
Or must it be reveal'd to none but thee ?

ŒDIPUS.

O no ! I'll tell thee ; Phœbus hath declar'd
That Œdipus should stain his mother's bed,
And dip his hands in his own father's blood ;
Wherefore I fled from Corinth, and liv'd here,

In happiness indeed ; but still thou know'st
 It is a blessing to behold our parents,
 And that I had not.

SHEPHERD.

Was it for this cause
 Thou wert an exile then ?

OEDIPUS.

It was ; I fear'd
 That I might one day prove my father's murderer.

SHEPHERD.

What if I come, O king, to banish hence
 Thy terrors, and restore thy peace.

OEDIPUS.

O, stranger,
 Could'st thou do this, I would reward thee nobly.

SHEPHERD.

Kow, then, for this I came ; I came to serve,
 And make thee happy.

OEDIPUS.

But I will not go
 Back to my parents.

SHEPHERD.

Son, I see thou know'st not
 What thou art doing —

OEDIPUS.

Wherefore think'st thou so ?
 By Heaven, I beg thee, then, do thou instruct me.

SHEPHERD.

If thou did'st fly from Corinth for this cause.

OEDIPUS.

Apollo's dire predictions still affright me.

SHEPHERD.

Fear'st thou pollution from thy parents ?

ŒDIPUS.

That,

And that alone I dread.

SHEPHERD.

Thy fears are vain.

ŒDIPUS.

Not if they are my parents.

SHEPHERD.

Polybus

Was not akin to thee.

ŒDIPUS.

What say'st thou ? Speak ;

Say, was not Polybus my father ?

SHEPHERD.

No ;

No more than he is mine.

ŒDIPUS.

Why call me then

His son ?

SHEPHERD.

Because long since I gave thee to him ;
He did receive thee from these hands.

ŒDIPUS.

Indeed !

And could he love another's child so well ?

SHEPHERD.

He had no children ; that persuaded him
To take and keep thee.

ŒDIPUS..

Did'st thou buy me then,
Or am I thine, and must I call thee father ?

SHEPHERD.

I found thee in Cithæron's woody vale.

ŒDIPUS.

What brought thee there ?

SHEPHERD.

I came to feed my flocks
On the green mountain's side.

ŒDIPUS.

It seems thou wert
A wand'ring shepherd.

SHEPHERD.

Thy deliverer ;
I sav'd thee from destruction.

ŒDIPUS.

How ! what then
Had happen'd to me ?

SHEPHERD.

Thy own feet will best
Inform thee of that circumstance.

ŒDIPUS.

Alas !
Why call'st thou to remembrance a misfortune
Of so long date ?

SHEPHERD.

'Twas I who loos'd the tendons
Of thy bored feet.

ŒDIPUS.

It seems in infancy
I suffer'd much then.

SHEPHERD.

To this accident
Thou ow'st thy name.

Thou ow'st thy name. Œdipus, signifies in the Greek, swelled-foot, ‘*tumore nactus nomen ac vitio pedum* (says Seneca) taking his name from the sore and swelling of his foot.’

ŒDIPUS.

My father, or my mother,
Who did it? know'st thou?

SHEPHERD.

He who gave thee to me,
Must tell thee that.

ŒDIPUS.

Then from another
Thou did'st receive me.

SHEPHERD.

Ay, another shepherd.

ŒDIPUS.

Who was he? can'st thou recollect?

SHEPHERD.

'Twas one,
At least so call'd, of Laius' family.

ŒDIPUS.

Laius, who rul'd at Thebes?

SHEPHERD.

The same; this man
Was shepherd to king Laius.

ŒDIPUS.

Lives he still,
And could I see him?

SHEPHERD, *pointing to Chorus.*

Some of these perhaps,
His countrymen, may give you information.

ŒDIPUS, *to the Chorus.*

O, speak, my friends, if any of you know
This shepherd; whether still he lives at Thebes
Or in some neighb'ring country; tell me quick,
For it concerns us near.

CHORUS.

It must be he
 Whom thou did'st lately send for ; but the queen
 Can best inform thee.

ŒDIPUS.

Know'st thou, my Jocasta,
 Whether the man whom thou did'st order hither,
 And whom the shepherd speaks of, be the same ?

JOCASTA.

Whom meant he ? for I know not. Œdipus,
 Think not so deeply of this thing.

ŒDIPUS.

Good Heaven
 Forbid, Jocasta, I should now neglect
 To clear my birth, when thus the path is mark'd
 And open to me !

JOCASTA.

Do not, by the gods
 I beg thee, do not, if thy life be dear,
 Make farther search, for I have felt enough
 Already from it.

ŒDIPUS.

Rest thou satisfied ;
 Were I descended from a race of slaves,
 'Twould not dishonour thee.

JOCASTA.

Yet hear me ; do not,
 Once more I beg thee, do not search this matter.

ŒDIPUS.

I will not be persuaded : I must search
 And find it too.

JOCASTA.

I know it best, and best

Advise thee.

ŒDIPUS.

That advice perplexes more.

JOCASTA.

O, would to Heaven that thou may'st never know
Or who, or whence thou art?

ŒDIPUS, *to the Attendants.*

Let some one fetch
That shepherd quick, and leave this woman here
To glory in her high descent.

JOCASTA.

Alas!

Unhappy Œdipus! that word alone
I now can speak, remember 'tis my last. [Exit.]

SCENE IV.

ŒDIPUS, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Why fled the queen in such disorder hence?
Sorely distress'd she seem'd, and much I fear
Her silence bodes some sad event.

ŒDIPUS.

Whate'er
May come of that, I am resolv'd to know
The secret of my birth, how mean soever
It chance to prove; perhaps her sex's pride
May make her blush to find I was not born
Of noble parents; but I call myself
The son of fortune, my indulgent mother,
Whom I shall never be ashamed to own.

The kindred months that are, like me, her children,
 The years that roll obedient to her will,
 Have rais'd me from the lowest state to power
 And splendor; wherefore, being what I am,
 I need not fear the knowledge of my birth.

SCENE V.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

If my prophetic soul doth well divine,
 E'er on thy brow to-morrow's sun shall shine,
 Cithæron, thou the myst'ry shalt unfold;
 The doubtful Œdipus, no longer blind,
 Shall soon his country and his father find,
 And all the story of his birth he told;
 Then shall we in grateful lays
 Celebrate our monarch's praise,
 And in the sprightly dance our songs triumphant
 raise.

ANTISTROPHE.

What heavenly power gave birth to thee, O king?
 From Pan, the god of mountains, did'st thou spring,
 With some fair daughter of Apollo join'd?
 Art thou from him who o'er Cyllene reigns,

If my prophetic soul, &c. Œdipus retreating with the shepherd of Corinth in expectation of the old man, to supply the intermediate space of time, the chorus advances towards the middle of the theatre, probably near the altar of Apollo. As they are inclined throughout to judge favourably of their sovereign, they seem to wish, and almost to believe, that he may be found the son of some divinity.

Swift Hermes, sporting in Arcadia's plains ?
 Some nymph of Helicon did Bacchus find,
 Bacchus, who delights to rove
 Through the forest, hill, and grove,
 And art thou, prince, the offspring of their love ?

SCENE VI.

ŒDIPUS, CHORUS, SHEPHERD FROM CORINTH.

ŒDIPUS.

If I may judge of one whom yet I ne'er
 Had converse with, yon old man, whom I see
 This way advancing, must be that same shepherd
 We lately sent for, by his age and mein,
 E'en as this stranger did describe him to us ;
 My servants too are with him ; but you best
 Can say, for you must know him well.

CHORUS.

'Tis he,
 My lord, the faithful shepherd of king Laius.

ŒDIPUS, *to the Shepherd from Corinth.*
 What say'st thou, stranger, is it he ?

SHEPHERD.

It is.

SCENE VII.

OLD SHEPHERD, OEDIPUS, SHEPHERD FROM CORINTH, CHORUS.

OEDIPUS.

Now, answer me, old man, look this way, speak,
Didst thou belong to Laius ?

OLD SHEPHERD.

'Sir, I did,
No hireling slave, but in his palace bred,
I serv'd him long.

OEDIPUS.

What was thy bus'ness there ?

OLD SHEPHERD.

For my life's better part I tended sheep.

OEDIPUS.

And whither didst thou lead them ?

OLD SHEPHERD.

To Cithæron,

And to the neighb'ring plains.

OEDIPUS.

Behold this man,

(pointing to the Shepherd of Corinth)

Dost thou remember to have seen him ?

OLD SHEPHERD.

Whom ?

What hath he done ?

OEDIPUS.

Him, who now stands before thee,
Call'st thou to mind, or converse or connection

Between you in times past ?

OLD SHEPHERD.

I cannot say

I recollect it now.

SHEPHERD OF CORINTH.

I do not wonder
He should forget me, but I will recall
Some facts of ancient date ; he must remember
When on Cithæron we together fed
Our sev'ral flocks, in daily converse join'd
From spring to autumn, and when winter bleak
Approach'd, retir'd ; I to my little cot
Convey'd my sheep, he to the palace led
His fleecy care ; can'st thou remember this ?

OLD SHEPHERD.

I do, but that is long, long since.

SHEPHERD OF CORINTH.

It is ;
But say, good shepherd, can'st thou call to mind
An infant, whom thou didst deliver to me,
Requesting me to breed him as my own ?

OLD SHEPHERD.

Ha ! wherefore ask'st thou this ?

SHEPHERD OF CORINTH, *pointing to Œdipus.*

Behold him here,

That very child.

OLD SHEPHERD.

O, say it not, away,
Perdition on thee !

ŒDIPUS.

Why reprove him thus ?
Thou art thyself to blame, old man.

OLD SHEPHERD.

In what

Am I to blame, my lord ?

OEDIPUS.

Thou wilt not speak
Touching this boy.

OLD SHEPHERD.

Alas ! poor man, he knows not
What he hath said.

OEDIPUS.

If not by softer means
To be persuaded, force shall wring it from thee.

OLD SHEPHERD.

Treat not an old man harshly.

OEDIPUS, to the attendants.

Bind his hands.

OLD SHEPHERD.

Wherefore, my lord ? what would'st thou have me
do ?

OEDIPUS.

That child he talks of, didst thou give it to him ?

OLD SHEPHERD.

I did, and would to heaven I then had died !

OEDIPUS.

Die soon thou shalt, unless thou tell'st it all.

OLD SHEPHERD.

Say rather if I do.

OEDIPUS.

This fellow means
To trifle with us, by his dull delay.

OLD SHEPHERD.

I do not ; said I not I gave the child ?

ŒDIPUS.

Whence came the boy ? was he thy own, or who
Did give him to thee ?

OLD SHEPHERD.

From another hand
I had receiv'd him.

ŒDIPUS.

Say, what hand ? from whom ?
Whence came he ?

OLD SHEPHERD.

Do not, by the gods I beg thce,
Do not inquire.

ŒDIPUS.

Force me to ask again,
And thou shalt die.

OLD SHEPHERD.

In Laius' palace born——

ŒDIPUS.

Son of a slave, or of the king ?

OLD SHEPHERD.

Alas !

'Tis death for me to speak.

ŒDIPUS.

And me to hear ;

Yet say it.

OLD SHEPHERD.

He was call'd the son of Laius ;
But ask the queen, for she can best inform thee.

ŒDIPUS.

Did she then give the child to thee ?

OLD SHEPHERD.

, She did.

ŒDIPUS.

For what ?

OLD SHEPHERD.

To kill him.

ŒDIPUS.

Kill her child ! inhuman

And barb'rous mother !

OLD SHEPHERD.

A dire oracle

Affrighted, and constrain'd her to it.

ŒDIPUS.

Ha !

What oracle ?

OLD SHEPHERD.

Which said, her son should slay

His parents.

ŒDIPUS.

Wherfore gav'st thou then the infant
To this old shepherd ?

OLD SHEPHERD.

Pity mov'd me to it :

I hop'd he would have soon convey'd his charge
To some far distant country ; he, alas !
Preserv'd him but for misery and wo ;
For, O, my lord, if thou indeed art he,
Thou art of all mankind the most unhappy.

ŒDIPUS.

O, me ! at length the mystery's unravell'd,
'Tis plain ; 'tis clear ; my fate is all determin'd :
Those are my parents who should not have been
Allied to me : she is my wife, e'en she
Whom nature had forbidden me to wed ;
I have slain him who gave me life, and now

Of thee, O light ! I take my last farewell ;
 For Œdipus shall ne'er behold thee more.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VIII.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

O, hapless state of human race !
 How quick the fleeting shadows pass
 Of transitory bliss below,
 Where all is vanity and wo !
 By thy example taught, O prince, we see,
 Man was not made for true felicity.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Thou, Œdipus, beyond the rest
 Of mortals, wert supremely blest ;
 Whom ev'ry hand conspir'd to raise,
 Whom ev'ry tongue rejoic'd to praise,
 When from the Sphynx thy all-preserving hand
 Stretch'd forth its aid to save a sinking land.

STROPHE II.

Thy virtues rais'd thee to a throne,
 And grateful Thebes was all thy own ;
 Alas ! how chang'd that glorious name !
 Lost are thy virtues, and thy fame ;
 How could'st thou thus pollute thy father's bed !
 How could'st thou thus thy hapless mother wed !

ANTISTROPHE II.

How could that bed unconscious bear
 So long the vile incestuous pair !

But time, of quick and piercing sight,
 Hath brought the horrid deed to light ;
 At length Jocasta owns her guilty flame,
 And finds a husband and a child the same.

EPODE.

Wretched son of Laius, thee
 Henceforth may I never see,
 But absent shed the pious tear,
 And weep thy fate with grief sincere !
 For thou didst raise our eyes to life and light,
 To close them now in everlasting night.

A C T V.

SCENE I.

MESSENGER; CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

Sages of Thebes, most honour'd and rever'd,
 If e'er the house of Labdacus was dear
 And precious to you, what will be your grief
 When I shall tell the most disastrous tale
 You ever heard, and to your eyes present
 A spectacle more dreadful than they yet
 Did e'er behold ! not the wide Danube's waves
 Nor Phacis' stream can wash away the stains
 Of this polluted palace ; the dire crimes

Long time conceal'd at length are brought to light ;
But those, which spring from voluntary guilt,
Are still more dreadful.

CHORUS.

Nothing can be worse
Than what we know already ; bring'st thou more
Misfortunes to us ?

MESSENGER.

To be grief, the queen,
Divine Jocasta's dead.

CHORUS.

Jocasta dead ! say, by what hand ?

MESSENGER.

Her own ;
And what's more dreadful, no one saw the deed.
What I myself beheld you all shall hear.
Enflam'd with rage, soon as she reach'd the palace,
Instant retiring to the nuptial bed,
She shut the door, then rav'd and tore her hair,
Call'd out on Laius dead, and bade him think
On that unhappy son who murder'd him,
And stain'd his bed ; then turning her sad eyes
Upon the guilty couch, she curs'd the place
Where she had borne a husband from her husband,
And children from her child ; what follow'd then
I know not, by the cries of Œdipus
Prevented, for on him our eyes were fix'd

Voluntary guilt. Alluding to the actions of Œdipus ; the murder and incest committed by him were involuntary crimes ; but his anger, impatience, contempt of the gods, and putting out his own eyes, were voluntary, and therefore, as Sopocles observes, more dreadful : doubtless no misfortunes are so bitter and iusupportable as those which we bring on ourselves by our own follies.

Attentive ; forth he came, beseeching us
 To lend him some sharp weapon, and inform him
 Where he might find his mother and his wife,
 His children's wretched mother, and his own :
 Some ill-designing power did then direct him
 (For we were silent,) to the queen's apartment,
 Forcing the bolt, he rush'd into the bed,
 And found Jocasta, where we all beheld her,
 Entangled in the fatal noose, which soon
 As he perceiv'd, loosing the pendent rope,
 Deeply he groan'd, and casting on the ground
 His wretched body, show'd a piteous sight
 To the beholders, on a sudden thence
 Starting, he pluck'd from off the robe she wore
 A golden buckle that adorn'd her side,
 And buried in his eyes the sharpen'd point,
 Crying, he ne'er again would look on her,
 Never would see his crimes or mis'ries more,
 Or those whom guiltless he could ne'er behold,
 Or those to whom he now must sue for aid ;
 His lifted eye-lids then, repeating still
 These dreadful plaints, he tore ; whilst down his
 cheek
 Fell showers of blood : such fate the wretched pair
 Sustain'd, partakers in calamity,
 Fallen from a state of happiness (for none
 Were happier once than they) to groans, and death,
 Reproach and shame, and ev'ry human wo.

Or those whom guiltless, &c. Meaning his children, whom he could not look on without the terrible recollection of his own guilt.

Or those to whom, &c. Meaning either his children, or Creon, to whom he applies in the last scene.

CHORUS.

And where is now the poor unhappy man?

MESSENGER.

Open the doors, he cries, and let all Thebes
 Behold his parent's murderer, adding words
 Not to be utter'd; banish'd now, he says,
 He must be, nor devoted as he is
 By his own curse, remain in this sad place:
 He wants a kind conductor and a friend
 To help him now, for 'tis too much to bear.
 But you will see him soon, for lo! the doors
 Are open'd, and you will behold a sight
 That would to pity move his deadliest foe.

SCENE II.

ŒDIPUS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

O, horrid sight! more dreadful spectacle
 Than e'er these eyes beheld! what madness urg'd
 thee
 To this sad deed? what power malignant heap'd
 On thy poor head such complicated wo?
 Unhappy man! alas! I would have held
 Some converse with thee, but thy looks affright me;
 I cannot bear to speak to thee.

ŒDIPUS.

O me!

Where am I? and whence comes the voice I hear?
 Where art thou, fortune?

CHORUS.

Chang'd to misery,
Dreadful to hear, and dreadful to behold.

ŒDIPUS.

O, cruel darkness! endless, hopeless night,
Shame, terrors, and unutterable wo!
More painful is the mem'ry of my crimes
Than all the wounds my wild distraction made.

CHORUS.

Thus doubly curs'd, O prince, I wonder not
At thy affliction.

ŒDIPUS.

Art thou here, my friend,
I know thy voice; thou would'st not leave the
wretched;
Thou art my faithful, kind assistant still.

CHORUS.

How could'st thou thus deprive thyself of sight!
What madness drove thee to the desp'rate deed?
What god inspir'd?

ŒDIPUS.

Apollo was the cause;
He was, my friends, the cause of all my woes;
But for these eyes, myself did quench their light;
I want not them; what use were they to me,
But to discover scenes of endless wo!

CHORUS.

'Tis but too true.

ŒDIPUS.

What pleasure now remains

Apollo was the cause. By delivering the oracle, which fore-told that Œdipus should kill his father, and afterwards pronouncing the dreadful sentence against the murderer.

For Œdipus ? he cannot joy in aught
 To sight or ear delightful. Curse on him,
 Whoe'er he was, that loosen'd my bound feet,
 And sav'd me, in Cithæron's vale, from death ;
 I owe him nothing : had I perish'd then,
 Much happier had it been for you, my friends,
 And for myself.

CHORUS.

I too could wish thou had'st.

ŒDIPUS.

I should not then have murder'd Laius ; then
 I had not ta'en Jocasta to my bed ;
 But now I am a guilty wretch, the son
 Of a polluted mother, father now
 To my own brothers, all that's horrible
 To nature is the lot of Œdipus.

CHORUS.

Yet must I blame this cruel act, for sure
 The loss of sight is worse than death itself.

ŒDIPUS.

I care not for thy counsel, or thy praise ;
 For with what eyes could I have e'er beheld
 My honour'd father in the shades below,
 Or my unhappy mother, both destroy'd
 By me ? this punishment is worse than death,
 And so it should be : sweet had been the sight
 Of my dear children, them I could have wish'd
 To gaze upon ; but I must never see
 Or them, or this fair city, or the palace
 Where I was born ; depriv'd of ev'ry bliss
 By my own lips, which doom'd to banishment
 The murderer of Laius, and expell'd
 The impious wretch, by gods and men accus'd :

Could I behold them after this ? O ! no !
Would I could now with equal ease remove
My hearing too, be deaf as well as blind,
And from another entrance shut out woe !
To want our senses, in the hour of ill,
Is comfort to the wretched. O ! Cithæron,
Why didst thou e'er receive me, or receiv'd,
Why not destroy, that men might never know
Who gave me birth ? O ! Polybus, O ! Corinth,
And thou, long time believ'd my father's palace,
O ! what a foul disgrace to human nature
Didst thou receive beneath a prince's form !
Impious myself, and from an impious race,
Where is my splendor now ? Oh ! Daulian path,
The shady forest, and the narrow pass
Where three ways meet, who drank a father's blood,
Shed by these hands ; do you not still remember
The horrid deed, and what, when here I came,
Follow'd more dreadful ? fatal nuptials, you
Produc'd me, you return'd me to the womb
That bare me ; thence relations horrible
Of fathers, sons and brothers came ; of wives,
Sisters and mothers, sad alliance ! all
That man holds impious and detestable.
But what in act is vile, the modest tongue
Should never name : bury me, hide me, friends,
From ev'ry eye ; destroy me, cast me forth
To the wide ocean, let me perish there ;
Do any thing to shake off hated life :
Seize me, approach, my friends, you need not fear,

You need not fear. Alluding to a superstitious notion amongst the ancients, that it was dangerous even to touch an accursed person, or one seemingly visited with misfortunes by the gods.

Polluted though I am, to touch me ; none
Shall suffer for my crimes but I alone.

CHORUS.

In most fit time, my lord, the noble Creon
This way advances ; he can best determine
And best advise ; sole guardian now of Thebes,
To him thy power devolves.

ŒDIPUS.

What shall I say ?

Can I apply to him for aid, whom late
I deeply injur'd by unjust suspicion ?

SCENE III.

CREON, ŒDIPUS, CHORUS.

CREON.

I come not, prince, to triumph o'er thy woes
With vile reproach ; I pity thy misfortunes ;
But, O ! my Thebans, if you do not fear
The censure of your fellow-citizens,
At least respect the all-creating eye
Of Phœbus, who beholds you thus exposing
To public view a wretch accus'd, polluted,
Whom neither earth can bear, nor sun behold,
Nor holy show'r besprinkle : take him hence,

Holy show'r. This refers to the curse pronounced by Œdipus himself on the murderer of Laius, in the first scene of the second act. It was customary (as is observed in a note on the passage) for the priests to sprinkle water on those who assisted at the sacrifice, and sometimes, probably, in such abundance as might properly be called ‘a shower.’



And reverence the gods.

ŒDIPUS.

Now, Creon, list !

I beg thee, I conjure thee, let a tomb
 Be rais'd, and all due honours paid to her
 Who lies within ; she was thy sister, Creon ;
 It is a duty which thou ow'st : for me,
 I cannot hope this city now will deign
 To keep me here ; O ! Creon, let me go,
 And seek the solitary mountain's top,
 My own Cithæron, by my parents doom'd
 Long since to be the grave of Œdipus ;
 There would I die, as they decreed I should :
 Alas ! I cannot, must not perish yet,
 Till I have suffer'd evils worse than death,
 For I was only sav'd to be unhappy.
 But I must meet my fate, whate'er it be.
 My sons are men, and wheresoever fortune
 May place them, cannot want the means of life ;
 They shall not burthen thee ; but, O ! my friend,
 What will become of my unhappy daughters ;
 With tend'rest love, beneath a father's hand,
 Cherish'd so long ? O take them to thy care,
 Thou best of men ! O ! might I but embrace them,
 But shed a tear o'er their disastrous fate,
 Might I be suffer'd but to touch them here,
 I should rejoice, and think I saw them still.
 But hark ! methinks even now I hear the voice
 Of my dear daughters ; hath the gracious Creon,
 In pity to my woes, already brought
 My children to me ; is it so ?

CREON.

It is;

Thy wishes are prevented; they are here.

SCENE IV.

DAUGHTERS OF OEDIPUS, OEDIPUS, CREON,
CHORUS.

OEDIPUS.

May heaven reward thee for this goodness to me,
And give thee much more bliss than I have known!
Now, my dear children, come towards me, come
Towards your father and your—brother; see—
These sightless eyes, pierc'd by my own mad hands;
Behold that wretched father who begat you
Unknowingly on her who gave me birth;
I cannot see you now, I can but weep
Your fate, to think what hours of wretchedness
You have to know hereafter: whither now
Must my poor children fly? from ev'ry feast
Joyless with grief and shame shall you return;
And when the time shall come, when riper years
Should give you to the nuptial bed, who then,
Careless of fame, will let his child partake
The infamy of my abhorred race,
Sprang from a wretch accurs'd, who kill'd his fa-
ther,
And from the womb that bare him did beget
You my unhappy daughters? such reproach
Must still be yours, to virgin solitude
Devoted ever, and a barren bed.

Son of Menœceus, thou alone art left
 Their father now, for, O ! Jocasta's dead,
 And I am—nothing ; do not then forsake
 Thy kindred; nor, deserted and forlorn,
 Suffer them still, in penury and wo,
 To wander helpless, in their tender age :
 Remember, they have no support but thee.
 O ! gen'rous prince, have pity on them, give me
 Thy friendly hand in promise of thy aid.
 To you, my daughters, had your early years
 Permitted, I had giv'n my last advice ;
 Too young for counsel, all I ask of you
 Is but to pray the gods that my sad life
 May not be long, but yours, my children, crown'd
 With many days, and happier far than mine.

CREON.

It is enough ; go in, thy grief transports thee
 Beyond all bounds.

ŒDIPUS.

'Tis hard, but I submit.

CREON.

The time demands it, therefore go.

ŒDIPUS.

O ! Creon,

Know'st thou what now I wish ?

CREON.

What is it ? speak.

ŒDIPUS.

That I may quit this fatal place.

CREON.

Thou ask'st

What heaven alone can grant.

ŒDIPUS.

I am most hateful.

CREON.

Yet shalt thou obtain
What thou desir'st.

ŒDIPUS.

Shall I indeed ?

CREON.

Thou shalt ;

I never say ought that I do not mean.

ŒDIPUS.

Then let me go ; may I depart ?

CREON.

Thou may'st ;

But leave thy children.

ŒDIPUS.

Do not take them from me.

CREON.

Thou must not always have thy will ; already
Thou'st suffer'd for it.

CHORUS.

Thebans, now behold
The great, the mighty Œdipus, who once
The Sphynx's dark ænigma could unfold ;
Who less to fortune than to wisdom ow'd ;
In virtue as in rank to all superior,
Yet fall'n at last to deepest misery.
Let mortals hence be taught to look beyond
The present time, nor dare to say, a man
Is happy, till the last decisive hour
Shall close his life without the taste of wo.

ANTIGONE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CREON, *King of Thebes.*

EURYDICE, *wife of Creon.*

HÆMON, *son of Creon.*

ANTIGONE, *daughter of Oedipus.*

ISMENE, *sister of Antigone.*

TIRESIAS, *a prophet.*

A Messenger, Guards, Servant, and Attendants.

CHORUS, *composed of ancient Men of Thebes.*

ANTIGONE.

A C T I.

SCENE I.

ANTIGONE, ISMENE.

ANTIGONE.

O ! my dear sister, my best-lov'd Ismene,
Is there an evil, by the wrath of Jove
Reserv'd for Oedipus' unhappy race,
We have not felt already ? sorrow and shame,

O ! my dear sister, &c. Eteocles and Polynices, sons of the unfortunate Oedipus, having an equal claim to the kingdom of Thebes, had agreed to divide the power, and to reign year by year alternately ; but Eteocles stepping first into the throne, and tasting the sweets of sovereignty, broke the contract, and maintained himself in the possession of his dominions. Polynices, in revenge, raised an army of Argians, and made an incursion on Thebes ; a battle ensued, and, after much slaughter on both sides, the brothers agreed to decide it by single combat ; they fought, and were slain by each other. After the death of the brothers the kingdom of Thebes devolved to their uncle Creon, whose first act of supreme power was an edict forbidding all rites of sepulture to Polynices, as a traitor ; and pronouncing instant death on any who should dare

And bitterness and anguish, all that's sad,
 All that's distressful hath been ours, and now
 This dreadful edict from the tyrant comes
 To double our misfortunes; hast thou heard
 What harsh commands he hath impos'd on all,
 Or art thou still to know what future ills
 Our foes have yet in store to make us wretched?

ISMENE.

Since that unhappy day, Antigone,
 When by each other's hand our brothers fell,
 And Greece dismiss'd her armies, I have heard
 Nought that could give or joy or grief to me.

ANTIGONE.

I thought thou wert a stranger to the tidings,
 And therefore call'd thee forth, that here alone
 I might impart them to thee.

ISMENE.

O! what are they!
 For something dreadful labours in thy breast.

ANTIGONE.

Know then, from Creon, our indulgent lord,
 Our hapless brothers met a different fate,
 To honour one, and one to infamy
 He hath consign'd; with fun'r'al rites he grac'd

to bury him. Here the action of the tragedy commences, the subject of which is the piety of Antigone in opposition to the edict of Creon, with the distresses consequent upon it. The time and place are exactly marked out in the first scene, where Antigone calls her sister out of the palace into the adjoining area, to inform her of the decree which had been issued out on the preceding day, and her resolutions concerning it.

With fun'r'al rites, &c. Of all the honours paid to the dead, the care of their funerals was looked upon by the an-

The body of our dear Eteocles,
 Whilst Polynices' wretched carcase lies
 Unburied, unlamented, left expos'd
 A feast for hungry vultures on the plain ;
 No pitying friend will dare to violate
 The tyrant's harsh command, for public death
 Awaits th' offender ; Creon comes himself
 To tell us of it, such is our condition ;
 This is the crisis, this the hour, Ismené,
 That must declare thee worthy of thy birth,
 Or show thee mean, base, and degenerate.

cients as most necessary and indispensable ; as to be deprived of sepulture was accounted the greatest misfortune, and the highest injury. No imprecation was therefore so terrible as that any person might 'die destitute of burial :' it was not to be wondered at that they were thus solicitous about the interment of their dead, when they were strongly possessed with the opinion that the souls of the deceased could not be admitted into the Elysian shades, but were forced to wander desolate and alone, till their bodies were committed to the earth. Nor was it sufficient to be honoured with the solemn performance of their funeral rites, except their bodies were prepared for burial by their relations, and interred in the sepulchres of their fathers ; we must not therefore be surprised to find the whole play of Antigone turning on this single incident ; for though the burial of a dead body would make but an indifferent foundation for a modern tragedy, it is a subject of dignity and importance, and highly suitable to the notions and genius of antiquity.

Unlamented. - This was the judgment which God denounced against Jehoiakim, king of Judah : 'they shall not lament for him, saying, ah ! my brother, or ah ! sister ; they shall not lament for him, saying, ah ! lord, or ah ! his glory ; he shall be buried with the burial of an ass,' &c. Jerem. 22, v. 18, 19. The customs and manners of the Greeks were originally drawn from the eastern nations, which accounts for the similitude so observable in Sophocles and other heathen writers with some parts of holy writ.

ISMENE.

What would'st thou have me do ? defy his power ?
Contemn the laws ?

ANTIGONE.

To act with me, or not :
Consider and resolve.

ISMENE.

What daring deed
Would'st thou attempt ? what is it ? speak.

ANTIGONE.

To join
And take the body, my Ismene.

ISMENE.

Ha !

And would'st thou dare to bury it, when thus
We are forbidden ?

ANTIGONE.

Ay, to bury HIM ;
He is my brother, and thine too, Ismene ;
Therefore consent or not, I have determin'd
I'll not disgrace my birth.

ISMENE.

Hath not the king
Pronounc'd it death to all ?

ANTIGONE.

He hath no right,
No power to keep me from my own.

ISMENE.

Alas !

Remember our unhappy father's fate,
His eyes torn out by his own fatal hand,
Oppress'd with shame and infamy he died ;
Fruit of his crimes ! a mother, and a wife,

Dreadful alliance ! self-devoted, fell ;
 And last, in one sad day, Eteocles
 And Polynices by each other slain.
 Left as we are, deserted and forlorn,
 What from our disobedience can we hope
 But misery and ruin ? poor weak women,
 Helpless, nor form'd by nature to contend
 With powerful man ; we are his subjects too ;
 Therefore to this, and worse than this, my sister,
 We must submit : for me, in humblest prayer
 Will I address me to th' infernal powers
 For pardon of that crime which well they know
 Sprang from necessity, and then obey ;
 Since to attempt what we can never hope
 To execute, is folly all and madness.

ANTIGONE.

Wert thou to proffer what I do not ask,
 Thy poor assistance, I would scorn it now :
 Act as thou wilt ; I'll bury him myself ;
 Let me perform but that, and death is welcome :
 I'll do the pious deed, and lay me down
 By my dear brother ; loving and belov'd
 We'll rest together : to the powers below,
 'Tis fit we pay obedience ; longer there
 We must remain, than we can breathe on earth,
 There I shall dwell for ever ; thou, mean time,
 What the gods hold most precious may'st despise.

ISMENE.

I reverence the gods ; but, in defiance
 Of laws, and unassisted to do this,
 It were most dang'rous.

ANTIGONE.

That be thy excuse,

Whilst I prepare the fun'ral pile.

ISMENE.

Alas !

I tremble for thee.

ANTIGONE.

Tremble for thyself,

And not for me.

ISMENE.

O ! do not tell thy purpose,
I beg thee, do not ; I shall ne'er betray thee.

ANTIGONE.

I'd have it known ; and I shall hate thee more
For thy concealment, than, if loud to all,
Thou would'st proclaim the deed.

ISMENE.

Thou hast a heart
Too daring, and ill-suited to thy fate.

ANTIGONE.

I know my duty, and I'll pay it there
Where 'twill be best accepted.

ISMENE.

Could'st thou do it ?

But 'tis not in thy power.

ANTIGONE.

When I know that
It will be time enough to quit my purpose.

ISMENE.

It cannot be ; 'tis folly to attempt it.

ANTIGONE.

Go on, and I shall hate thee ; our dead brother,
He too shall hate thee as his bitt'rest foe ;
Go, leave me here to suffer for my rashness ;
Whate'er befalls, it cannot be so dreadful
As not to die with honour.

ISMENE.

Then farewell,

Since thou wilt have it so ; and know, Ismene
Pities thy weakness, but admires thy virtue.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

By Dirce's sweetly-flowing stream,
Ne'er did the golden eye of day
On Thebes with fairer lustre beam,
Or shine with more auspicious ray.

See, the proud Argive, with his silver shield
And glitt'ring armour, quits the hostile plain ;
No longer dares maintain the luckless field,
But vanquish'd flies, nor checks the loosen'd
rein.

With dreadful clangor, like the bird of Jove,
On snowy wings descending from above,

By Dirce's sweetly-flowing stream, &c. The kingdom of Thebes, which had been torn to pieces by the dissension of the two brothers, being at length by their deaths restored to peace and tranquillity, the principal and most ancient inhabitants, who form the chorus, are brought together with the utmost propriety to sing a song of triumph on the occasion : as they are the friends and counsellors of Creon, we find them condemning Polynices as author of the war, and rejoicing in his defeat. George Rataller, the only Latin translator who has ever done justice to Sophocles, has turned this noble chorus into a good sapphic ode.

His vaunted powers to this devoted land
 In bitt'rest wrath did Polynices lead,
 With crested helmets, and a num'rous band
 He came, and fondly hop'd that Thebes should
 bleed.

ANTISTROPHE I.

High on the lofty tower he stood,
 And view'd th' encircled gates below,
 With spears that thirsted for our blood,
 And seem'd to scorn th' unequal foe ;
 But fraught with vengeance, ere the rising flame
 Could waste our bulwarks, or our walls sur-
 round,
 Mars to assist the fiery serpent came,
 And brought the tow'ring eagle to the ground.
 That god, who hates the boastings of the proud,
 Saw the rude violence of th' exulting crowd ;
 Already now the triumph was prepar'd,
 The wreath of vict'ry, and the festal song,
 When Jove the clash of golden armour heard,
 And hurl'd his thunder on the guilty throng.

STROPHE II.

Then Capaneus, elate with pride,
 Fierce as the rapid whirlwind came,

The fiery serpent, &c. By the dragon or fiery serpent, we are to understand the Theban army attacked by the eagle Polynices.

Then Capaneus, &c. Capaneus was one of the seven captains who came against Thebes : after he had mounted to the top of the scaling ladders, he was beat down with stones and slain ; which gave the poets an opportunity of reporting him to have been struck dead with lightning. Statius calls him, ‘superum contemptor,’ ‘a contemner of the gods.’

Eager he seem'd on every side
 To spread the all-devouring flame ;
 But soon he felt the winged light'ning's blast,
 By angry Heaven with speedy vengeance sent,
 Down from the lofty turrets headlong east,
 For his foul crimes he met the punishment.
 Each at his gate long time the leaders strove,
 Then fled, and left their arms to conqu'ring Jove ;
 Save the unhappy death-devoted pair,
 The wretched brethren, who unconquer'd
 stood,
 With rancorous hate inspir'd, and fell despair,
 They reek'd their vengeance in each other's
 blood.

ANTISTROPHE II.

And, lo ! with smiles propitious see
 To Thebes, for num'rous ears renown'd,
 The goddess comes, fair victory,
 With fame and endless glory crown'd !
 Henceforth, no longer vex'd by war's alarms,
 Let all our sorrows, all our labours cease ;
 Come, let us quit the din of rattl'ing arms,
 And fill our temples with the songs of peace.
 The god of Thebes shall guide our steps aright,
 And crown with many a lay the festive night.
 But, see, still anxious for his native land,
 Our king, Menœceus' valiant son, appear ;
 With some fair omen by the god's command
 He comes to meet his aged counsil here.

[Exeunt.]

Each at his gate, &c. The Greek is, the seven leaders
 stood at the seven gates.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

CREON, CHORUS.

CREON.

At length our empire, shook by civil broils,
The gods to peace and safety have restor'd;
Wherefore, my friends, you had our late request
That you should meet us here; for well I know
Your firm allegiance to great Laius, next
To Oedipus, and his unhappy sons;
These by each other's hand untimely slain,
To me the sceptre doth of right descend,
As next in blood: never can man be known,
His mind, his will, his passions ne'er appear
Till power and office call them forth; for me,
'Tis my firm thought, and I have held it ever,
That he who rules and doth not follow that
Which wisdom counsels, but restrain'd by fear
Shuts up his lips, must be the worst of men;
Nor do I deem him worthy who prefers
A friend, how dear soever, to his country.
Should I behold (witness all-seeing Jove)
This city wrong'd, I never would be silent,
Never would make the foe of Thebes my friend.

For on her safety must depend our own ;
And if she flourish we can never want
Assistance or support : thus would I act,
And therefore have I sent my edict forth
Touching the sons of Oedipus, commanding
That they should bury him who nobly fought
And died for Thebes, the good Eteocles,
Gracing his mem'ry with each honour due
To the illustrious dead ; for Polynices,
Abandon'd exile, for a brother's blood
Thirsting insatiate, he who would in flames
Have wasted all, his country, and his gods,
And made you slaves, I have decreed he lie
Unburied, his vile carcase to the birds
And hungry dogs a prey, there let him rot
Inglorious, 'tis my will ; for ne'er from me
Shall vice inherit virtue's due reward,
But him alone who is a friend to Thebes,
Living or dead shall Creon rev'rence still.

Him alone, &c. Creon, conscious to himself that the edict forbidding the burial of Polynices must be highly unpopular, and would probably be construed by his subjects as an act of arbitrary power, calls a council of the principal and most ancient inhabitants of Thebes, to whom he artfully represents his conduct, not as the effect of private resentment, but of his zealous regard for the public welfare ; and as he was apprehensive that the friends of Polynices would, in spite of all his precautions, bury the body, he prepares them for that severity with which he had resolved to treat the offender. The council, we may observe, is composed of slaves, who are obliged to assent to what they could not approve, and submit to orders which they could not resist. By this lively representation of the evils and miseries of an arbitrary government, the poet pays an oblique compliment to his countrymen the Athenians, who would naturally take a pleasure in comparing it with the freedom and happiness of their own. The chorus, according to

CHORUS.

Son of Menœceus, 'twas thy great behest
 Thus to reward them both; thine is the power
 O'er all supreme, the living and the dead.

CREON.

Be careful then my orders are obey'd.

CHORUS.

O sir, to younger hands commit the task.

CREON.

I have appointed some to watch the body.

CHORUS.

What then remains for us?

CREON.

To see that none

By your connivance violate the law.

CHORUS.

Scarce will the man be found so fond of death
 As to attempt it.

CREON.

Death is the reward

Of him who dares it; but oftentimes by hope
 Of sordid gain are men betray'd to ruin.

Horace, should indeed always appear as the friends of distressed virtue; but in this case Sophocles, we see, is excusable, as it could not be done, considering whom they are composed of, with any degree of propriety.

SCENE II.

MESSENGER, CREON, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

O king, I cannot boast, that hither sent
 I came with speed, for oft my troubled thoughts
 Have driven me back ; oft to myself I said,
 Why dost thou seek destruction ? yet again
 If thou report it not, from other tongues
 Creon must hear the tale ; and thou wilt suffer :
 With doubts like these oppress'd, slowly I came,
 And the short way seem'd like a tedious journey ;
 At length I come, resolv'd to tell thee all :
 Whate'er th' event, I must submit to fate.

CREON.

Whence are thy fears, and why this hesitation ?

MESSENGER.

First for myself ; I merit not thy wrath ;
 It was not I, nor have I seen the man
 Who did the guilty deed.

CREON.

Something of weight
 Thou hast t' impart, by this unusual care
 To guard thee from our anger.

MESSENGER.

Fear will come

First for myself, &c. The servant in Terence prefaces his tale with the like formality :

Here, primum te arbitrari quod res est velim,
 Quicquid hujus factum est, culpâ non factum est me⁴.

Where danger is.

CREON.

Speak, and thou hast thy pardon.

MESSENGER.

The body of Polynices some rash hand
Hath buried, scatter'd o'er his corpse the dust,
And fun'ral rites perform'd.

CREON.

Who dar'd do this?

MESSENGER.

'Tis yet unknown; no mark of instrument
Is left behind; the earth still level all,
Nor worn by track of chariot wheel; the guard,
Who watch'd that day, call it a miracle;
No tomb was rais'd; light lay the scatter'd earth,
As only meant t' avoid th' imputed curse;
Nor could we trace the steps of dog or beast
Passing that way; instant a tumult rose,
The guards accus'd each other; nought was prov'd,
But each suspected each, and all denied,
Off'ring in proof of innocence to grasp

As only meant, &c. In Greece the person was looked on as accursed, and guilty of the greatest inhumanity, who passed by an unburied corpse without casting dust or soft earth upon it, which in cases of necessity was considered as sufficient to gain the ghost's admission into Pluto's dominions; travellers, therefore, though in ever so much haste, if they met with a dead body, thought it their duty to sprinkle it three times in this manuer. This custom is alluded to by Horace.

Quauquam festinas, non est mora longa, licebit

Injecto ter pulvere, curras. Lib. 1, od. 28.

To grasp the burning steel. It was usual, in ancient Greece, for persons accused of any considerable crime to clear themselves from the imputation, by taking a solemn oath that

The burning steel, to walk through fire, and take
Their solemn oath they knew not of the deed ;
At length, one mightier than the rest, propos'd
(Nor could we think of better means) that all
Should be to thee discover'd ; 'twas my lot
To bring th' unwelcome tidings, and I come
To pour my news unwilling into ears
Unwilling to receive it, for I know
None ever lov'd the messenger of ill.

CHORUS.

To me it seems as if the hand of Heaven
Were in this deed.

CREON.

Be silent, ere my rage,
Thou rash old man, pronounce thee fool and do-
tard ;
Horrid suggestion ! think'st thou then, the gods
Take care of men like these ? would they preserve,
Or honour him who came to burn their altars,
Profane their rites, and trample on their laws ?
Will they reward the bad ? it cannot be :
But well I know, the murmur'ring citizens
Brook'd not our mandate, shook their heads in se-
cret,

they were not guilty of it, at the same time holding in their hands a red hot iron called Mudros, which, if they expressed no sense of pain, was admitted as a sufficient proof of their innocence.

To walk through fire. This method of clearing themselves is exactly similar to our Saxon custom of purgation by fire-ordeal, wherein the person accused passed blindfold and bare-footed over red-hot ploughshares. This is said to have been performed by Emma, the mother of Edward the confessor, to vindicate her honour from the scandal of incontinency with Alwyn, bishop of Winchester.

And, ill-affected to me, would not stoop
 Their haughty crests, or bend beneath my yoke;
 By hire corrupted, some of these have dar'd
 The vent'rous deed: gold is the worst of ills
 That ever plagu'd mankind; this wastes our cities,
 Drives forth their natives to a foreign soil,
 Taints the pure heart, and turns the virtuous mind
 To basest deeds; artificer of fraud
 Supreme, and source of ev'ry wickedness:
 The wretch corrupted for this hateful purpose
 Must one day suffer; for, observe me well,
 As I revere that power by whom I swear,
 Almighty Jove, if you conceal him from me,
 If to my eyes you do not bring the traitor,
 Know, death alone shall not suffice to glut
 My vengeance; living shall you hang in torments
 Till you confess, till you have learn'd from me
 There is a profit not to be desir'd,
 And own, dishonest gains have ruin'd more
 Than they have sav'd.

MESSENGER.

O king, may I depart,
 Or wait thy further orders.

CREON.

Know'st thou not
 Thy speech is hateful? hence.

MESSENGER.

Wherefore, my lord?

CREON.

Know you not why?

MESSENGER.

I but offend your ear,
 They who have done the deed afflict your soul.

CREON.

Away ; thy talk but makes thy guilt appear.

MESSENGER.

My lord, I did not do it.

CREON.

Thou hast sold

Thy life for gain.

MESSENGER.

'Tis cruel to suspect me,

CREON.

Thou talk'st it bravely ; but, remember all,
Unless you do produce him, you shall find
The mis'ries which on ill-got wealth await. [Exit.

MESSENGER.

Would he were found ! that we must leave to fate ;
Be't as it may, I never will return ;
Thus safe beyond my hopes, 'tis fit I pay
My thanks to the kind gods who have preserv'd me.

[Exit.

SCENE III.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Since first this active world began,
Nature is busy all in ev'ry part ;

Since first this, &c. This intermede, or song of the chorus, seems to have less connection with the subject of the tragedy, than perhaps any other in Sophocles ; it describes the extensive range of human science, and its application to good or evil purposes, according to the dispositions of men.

But passing all in wisdom and in art,
 Superior shines inventive man :
 Fearless of wint'ry winds, and circling waves,
 He rides the ocean, and the tempest braves ;
 On him unwearied earth with lavish hand,
 Immortal goddess, all her bounty pours,
 Patient beneath the rigid plough's command,
 Year after year she yields her plenteous stores.

ANTISTROPHE I.

To drive the natives of the wood
 From their rude haunts, or in the cruel snare,
 To catch the wing'd inhabitants of air,
 Or trap the scaly brood ;
 To tame the fiery courser yet unbroke
 With the hard rein, or to the untried yoke
 To bend the mountain bull, who wildly free
 O'er the steep rocks had wander'd unconfin'd ;
 These are the arts of mortal industry,
 And such the subtle power of human kind.

STROPHE II.

By learning, and fair science crown'd,
 Behold him now full-fraught with wisdom's lore,
 The laws of nature anxious to explore,
 With depth of thought profound.
 But nought, alas ! can human wisdom see
 In the dark bosom of futurity.
 The power of wisdom may awhile prevail,
 Awhile suspend a mortal's fleeting breath,
 But never can her fruitless arts avail
 To conquer fate, or stop the hand of death.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Man's ever active changeful will

Sometimes to good shall bend his virtuous
mind,

Sometimes behold him to foul deeds inclin'd,
And prone to ev'ry ill.

Who guiltless keeps the laws is still approv'd

By ev'ry tongue, and by his country lov'd ;

But he who doth not, from his native land

A wretched exile, far, O, far from me

May he be driven, by angry Heaven's command,
And live devote to shame and infamy.

CHORUS.

Amazement ! can it be Antigone,

Or do my eyes deceive me ! no, she comes,

O, wretched daughter of a wretched father,

Hast thou transgress'd the laws, and art thou ta'en
In this advent'rous deed, unhappy maid ?

SCENE IV.

ANTIGONE, GUARD, CHORUS.

GUARD.

Behold the woman who hath done the deed,

I'th' very act of burial we surpriz'd her.

Where is the king ?

CHORUS.

Return'd as we could wish ;

E'en now he comes this way.

SCENE V.

CREON, ANTIGONE, GUARD, CHORUS.

CREON.

Whom have we here ?

Doth justice smile upon us ?

GUARD.

O, my lord,

Never should man too confident assert,
 Much less by oath should bind himself to aught,
 For soon our judgments change, and one opinion
 Destroys another ; by thy threats alarm'd
 But now, I vow'd I never would return,
 Yet thus preserv'd, beyond my hopes, I come,
 Bound by that duty which I owe to thee
 And to my country, to bring here this virgin,
 Whom, as she sprinkled o'er her brother's dust
 The varied wreath, we seiz'd ; the willing task
 Was mine, nor as of late by lot determin'd.
 Receive her then, O king, judge and condemn
 The guilty, as it best becomes thy wisdom ;
 Henceforth I stand acquitted.

CREON.

But say how,

Where did'st thou find her ? .

GUARD.

To say all, 'twas she

Who buried Polynices.

CREON.

Art thou sure ?

GUARD.

'These eyes beheld her.

CREON.

But, say, how discover'd ?

GUARD.

Thus then it was ; no sooner had I left thee
 Than mindful of thy wrath, with careful hands
 From off the putrid carcase we remov'd
 The scatter'd dust, then to avoid the stench,
 Exhaling noisome, to a hill retir'd ;
 There watch'd at distance, till the mid-day sun
 Scorch'd o'er our heads ; sudden a storm arose,
 Shook every leaf, and rattled through the grove,
 Filling the troubled element ; we clos'd
 Our eyes, and patient bore the wrath of Heaven :
 At length the tempest ceas'd ; when we beheld
 This virgin issuing forth, and heard her cries
 Distressful, like the plaintive bird who views
 The plunder'd nest, and mourns her ravish'd young ;
 E'en thus the maid, when on the naked corse
 She cast her eyes, loud shriek'd, and curs'd the
 hand

That did the impious deed, then sprinkled o'er
 The crumbled earth, and from a brazen urn
 Of richest work to the lov'd relics thrice
 Her due libations pour'd ; we saw, and strait
 Pursu'd her ; unappall'd she seem'd, and still
 As we did question her, confess'd it all.
 It pleas'd, and yet methought it griev'd me too.
 To find ourselves releas'd from woes is bliss
 Supreme, but thus to see our friends unhappy
 Embitters all ; I must be thankful still
 For my own safety, which I hold most dear.

CREON.

Speak thou, who bend'st to earth thy drooping head;

Dost thou deny the fact?

ANTIGONE.

Deny it? No:

'Twas I.

CREON, *to the guard.*

Retire, for thou art free; and now

(*turning to Antigone*)

Be brief, and tell me; heard'st thou our decree?

ANTIGONE.

I did; 'twas public; how could I avoid it?

CREON.

And dar'st thou, then, to disobey the law?

ANTIGONE.

I had it not from Jove, nor the just gods
 Who rule below; nor could I ever think
 A mortal's law of power or strength sufficient
 To abrogate th' unwritten law divine,
 Immutable, eternal, not like these
 Of yesterday, but made e'er time began.
 Shall man persuade me then to violate
 Heaven's great commands, and make the gods my
 foes?

Without thy mandate, death had one day come;
 For who shall 'scape it? and if now I fall
 A little sooner, 'tis the thing I wish.
 To those who live in misery like me,
 Believe me, king, 'tis happiness to die;
 Without remorse I shall embrace my fate;
 But to my brother had I left the rites
 Of sepulture unpaid, I then indeed

Had been most wretched ; this to thee may seem
 Madness and folly ; if it be, 'tis fit
 I should act thus, it but resembles thee.

CREON.

Sprung from a sire perverse and obstinate,
 Like him, she cannot bend beneath misfortune ;
 But know, the proudest hearts may be subdu'd ;
 Hast thou not mark'd the hardest steel by fire
 Made soft and flexible ? myself have seen
 By a slight rein the fiery courser held.
 'Tis not for slaves to be so haughty ; yet
 This proud offender, not content, it seems,
 To violate my laws, adds crime to crime ;
 Smiles at my threats, and glories in her guilt ;
 If I should suffer her to 'scape my vengeance,
 She were the man, not I ; but though she sprang
 E'en from my sister, were I bound to her
 By ties more dear than is Hercæan Jove,
 She should not 'scape ; her sister too I find
 Accomplice in the deed ; go, call her forth,

(to one of the attendants)

She is within, I saw her raving there,
 Her senses lost, the common fate of those
 Who practice dark and deadly wickedness.

(turning to Antigone)

If it be, &c. Literally translated it would be 'I talk foolishly to a fool ;' this is exactly what Eleetra says to Clytemnestra.

Hercæan Jove. Jupiter Hercæus, so called from being the guardian of every man's private habitation : in times of war and public calamity, altars were erected to him, to which the unhappy fled as an asylum. Priam is reported to have been slain before one of these, as is alluded to by Ovid,

Cui nihil Hercæi profuit ara Jovis.—Ov. in ibid.

I cannot bear to see the guilty stand
 Convicted of their crimes, and yet pretend
 To gloss them o'er with specious names of virtue.

ANTIGONE.

I am thy captive; thou would'st have my life;
 Will that content thee?

CREON.

Yes; 'tis all I wish.

ANTIGONE.

Why this delay then, when thou know'st my words
 To thee as hateful are, as thine to me?
 Therefore dispatch; I cannot live to do
 A deed more glorious; and so these would all

(pointing to the Chorus)

Confess, were not their tongues restrain'd by fear;
 It is the tyrant's privilege, we know,
 To speak and act whate'er he please, uncensur'd.

CREON.

Lives there another in the land of Thebes,
 Who thinks as thou dost?

ANTIGONE.

Yes, a thousand; these,
 These think so too, but dare not utter it.

CREON.

Dost thou not blush?

ANTIGONE.

For what? why blush to pay
 A sister's duty?

CREON.

But, Eteocles,
 Say, was not he thy brother too?

ANTIGONE.

He was.

CREON.

Why then thus rev'rence him who least deserv'd it?

ANTIGONE.

Perhaps that brother thinks not so.

CREON.

He must,

If thou pay'st equal honour to them both.

ANTIGONE.

He was a brother, not a slave.

CREON.

One fought

Against that country, which the other sav'd.

ANTIGONE.

But equal death the rites of sepulture
Decrees to both.

CREON.

What! reverence alike

The guilty and the innocent!

ANTIGONE.

Perhaps

The gods below esteem it just.

CREON.

A foe

Though dead, should as a foe be treated still:

ANTIGONE.

My love shall go with thine, but not my hate.

CREON.

Go, then, and love them in the tomb; but know,
No woman rules in Thebes, whilst Creon lives.

CHORUS.

Lo! at the portal stands the fair Ismene,
Tears in her lovely eyes, a cloud of grief

Sits on her brow, wetting her beauteous cheek
With pious sorrows for a sister's fate.

SCENE VI.

ISMENE, ANTIGONE, CREON, CHORUS.

CREON.

Come forth, thou serpent, little did I think
That I had nourish'd two such deadly foes
To suck my blood, and cast me from my throne :
What say'st thou ? wert thou 'complice in the deed,
Or wilt thou swear that thou art innocent ?

ISMENE.

I do acknowledge it, if she permit me,
I was accomplice, and the crime was mine.

ANTIGONE.

'Tis false, thou did'st refuse, nor would I hold
Communion with thee.

ISMENE.

But in thy misfortunes
Let me partake, my sister, let me be
A fellow-suff'rer with thee.

ANTIGONE.

Witness, death,
And ye infernal gods, to which belongs
The great, the glorious deed ! I do not love
These friends in word alone.

ISMENE.

Antigone,
Do not despise me, I but ask to die
With thee, and pay due honours to the dead.

ANTIGONE.

Pretend not to a merit which thou hast not.
Live thou ; it is enough for me to perish.

ISMENE.

But what is life without thee ?

ANTIGONE.

Ask thy friend
And patron there. (pointing to Creon)

ISMENE.

Why that unkind reproach,
When thou should'st rather comfort me ?

ANTIGONE.

Alas !
It gives me pain when I am forc'd to speak
So bitterly against thee.

ISMENE.

Is there aught
That I can do to save thee ?

ANTIGONE.

Save thyself,
I shall not envy thee.

ISMENE.

And will you not
Permit me then to share your fate ?

ANTIGONE.

Thy choice
Was life ; 'tis mine to die.

ISMENE.

I told thee oft
It would be so.

ANTIGONE.

Thou did'st, and was't not well
Thus to fulfil thy prophecy ?

ISMENE.

The crime
Was mutual, mutual be the punishment.

ANTIGONE.

Fear not; thy life is safe, but mine long since
Devoted to the dead.

CREON.

Both seem depriv'd
Of reason; one indeed was ever thus.

ISMENE.

O, king, the mind doth seldom keep her seat
When sunk beneath misfortunes.

CREON.

Sunk, indeed,
Thou wert in wretchedness to join with her.

ISMENE.

But what is life without Antigone?

CREON.

Then think not of it; for she is no more.

ISMENE.

Would'st thou destroy thy son's long destin'd wife?

CREON.

O! we shall find a fitter bride.

ISMENE.

Alas!

He will not think so.

CREON.

I'll not wed my son
To a base woman.

ANTIGONE.

O, my dearest Hæmon!
And is it thus thy father doth disgrace thee?

CREON.

Such an alliance were as hateful to me
As is thyself.

ISMENE.

Wilt thou then take her from him?

CREON.

Their nuptials shall be finished by death.

ISMENE.

She then must perish?

CREON.

So must you and I;

Therefore no more delay; go, take them hence,
Confine them both: henceforth they shall not stir;
When death is near at hand the bravest fly.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Thrice happy they, whose days in pleasure flow,
Who never taste the bitter cup of wo;

For when the wrath of Heaven descends
On some devoted house, there foul disgrace,
With grief and all her train attends,
And shaine and sorrow o'erwhelm the wretched
race.

E'en as the Thracian sea, when vex'd with storms,

Thrice happy they, &c. This beautiful intermede, or song of the chorus, arises naturally from the preceding circumstances, and laments the ruin of the family of Oedipus. The strophe, on the power and knowledge of Jupiter, is noble and poetical, and gives us a favourable idea of heathen piety and virtue.

Whilst darkness hangs incumbent o'cr the deep,
When the bleak North the troubl'd scene deforms,
And the black sands in rapid whirlwinds sweep,
The groaning waves beat on the trembling shore,
And echoing hills rebeallow to the roar.

ANTISTROPHE I.

O Labdacus, thy house must perish all ;
E'en now I see the stately ruin fall ;
Shame heap'd on shame, and ill on ill,
Disgrace and never-ending woes ;
Some angry god pursues thee still,
Nor grants or safety or repose :
One fair and lovely branch unwither'd stood
And brav'd th' inclement skies ;
But Pluto comes, inexorable god,
She sinks, she raves, she dies.

STROPHE II.

Shall man below controul the gods above,
Or human pride restrain the power of Jove,
Whose eyes by all-subduing sleep
Are never clos'd as feeble mortals are,
But still their watchful vigils keep
Through the large circle of th' eternal year ?
Great lord of all, whom neither time nor age
With envious stroke can weaken or decay ;
He, who alone the future can presage,
Who knows alike to-morrow as to-day ;

O Labdacus, &c. The genealogy of the unfortunate house of Oedipus runs thus, ‘ Cadmus, Polydorus, Labdacus, Laius, Oedipus, Eteocles, Polynices, Antigone, and Ismene.’

One fair and lovely branch, &c. The Chorus here plainly alludes to the unfortunate Antigone, whom Pluto, or the infernal gods, obliged to pay funeral rites to her brother Polynices,

Whilst wretched man is doom'd, by Heaven's decree,
To toil and pain, to sin and misery.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Ofttimes the flatt'rer hope, that joy inspires,
Fills the proud heart of man with fond desires;

He, careless trav'ller, wanders still

Through life, unmindful of deceit,

Nor dreads the danger, till he feel

The burning sands beneath his feet.

When Heaven impels to guilt the madd'ning mind,

Then good like ill appears,

And vice, for universal hate design'd,

The face of virtue wears.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

CREON, HÆMON, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Behold, O king, thy youngest hope appear,
The noble Hæmon; lost in grief he seems,
Weeping the fate of poor Antigone.

CREON.

He comes, and better than a prophet, soon

Shall we divine his inmost thoughts : my son,
 Com'st thou, well-knowing our decree, to mourn
 Thy promis'd bride, and angry to dispute
 A father's will ; or, whatsoe'er we do
 Still to hold best, and pay obedience to us ?

HÆMON.

My father, I am thine ; do thou command,
 And I in all things shall obey ; 'tis fit
 My promis'd nuptial rites give place to thee.

CREON.

It will become thine with obedience thus
 To bear thee ever, and in ev'ry act
 To yield submissive to a father's will :
 'Tis therefore, O my son, that men do pray
 For children, who with kind officious duty
 May guard their helpless age, resist their foes,
 And, like their parents, love their parent's friend ;
 But he, who gets a disobedient child,
 What doth he get but misery and wo ?
 His enemies will laugh the wretch to scorn.
 Take heed, my son, thou yield not up thy reason,
 In hopes of pleasure from a worthless woman ;
 For cold is the embrace of impious love,
 And deep the wounds of false dissembling friend-
 ship ;
 Hate then thy bitt'rest foe, despise her arts,
 And leave her to be wedded to the tomb ;
 Of all the city her alone I found
 Rebellious ; but I have her, nor shall Thebes
 Say I'm a liar ; I pronounc'd her fate,
 And she must perish ; let her call on Jove
 Who guards the rights of kindred, and the ties
 Of nature ; for if those by blood united

Transgress the laws, I hold myself more near
 E'en to a stranger : who in private life
 Is just and good, will to his country too
 Be faithful ever ; but the man who proud
 And fierce of soul contemnus authority,
 Despiseth justice, and o'er those who rule
 Would have dominion, such shall never gain
 Th' applauding voice of Creon ; he alone,
 Whom the consenting citizens approve,
 Th' acknowledg'd sov'reign, should in all com-
 mand ;

Just or unjust his laws, in things of great
 Or little import, whatsoe'er he bids,
 A subject is not to dispute his will ;
 He knows alike to rule and to obey ;
 And in the day of battle will maintain
 The foremost rank, his country's best defence.
 Rebellion is the worst of human ills ;
 This ruins kingdoms, this destroys the peace
 Of noblest families, this wages war,
 And puts the brave to flight ; whilst fair obedience
 Keeps all in safety ; to preserve it ever
 Should be a king's first care ; we will not yield
 To a weak woman ; if we must submit,
 At least we will be conquered by a man,
 Nor by a female arm thus fall inglorious.

HÆMON.

Wisdom, my father, is the noblest gift

Th' acknowledged sov'reign, &c. Sophocles, with the utmost propriety, puts the maxims of arbitrary government into the mouth of a tyrant, whose character he designs to render more odious and detestable to his countrymen, the free citizens of Athens.

The gods bestow on man, and better far
Than all his treasures ; what thy judgment deems
Most fit, I cannot, would not reprehend ;
Others perhaps might call it wrong ; for me,
My duty only bids me to inform you
If aught be done or said that casts reproach
Or blame on you : such terror would thy looks
Strike on the low plebeian, that he dare not
Say aught unpleasing to thee ; be it mine
To tell thee, then, what I of late have heard
In secret whisper'd : your afflicted people
United mourn th' unhappy virgin's fate
Unmerited, most wretched of her sex,
To die for deeds of such distinguish'd virtue,
For that she would not let a brother lie
Unburied, to the dogs and birds a prey ;
Was it not rather, say the murmur'ring crowd,
Worthy of golden honours, and fair praise ?
Such are their dark and secret discontents.
Thy welfare, and thy happiness alone
Are all my wish ; what can a child desire
More than a father's honour, or a father
More than his child's ? O, do not then retain
Thy will, and still believe no sense but thine
Can judge aright : the man who proudly thinks
None but himself or eloquent or wise,
By time betray'd, is branded for an ideot ;
True wisdom will be ever glad to learn,
And not too fond of power ; observe the trees
That bend to wint'ry torrents, how their boughs
Unhurt remain, whilst those that brave the storm,
Uprooted torn, shall wither and decay ;
The pilot, whose unslacken'd sail defies

Contending winds, with shatter'd bark pursues
 His dang'rous course ; then mitigate thy wrath,
 My father, and give way to sweet repentance.
 If to my youth be aught of judgment given,
 He, who by knowledge and true wisdom's rules
 Guides ev'ry action, is the first of men ;
 But since to few that happiness is given,
 The next is he, who, not too proud to learn,
 Follows the counsels of the wise and good.

CHORUS.

O king, if right the youth advise, 'tis fit
 That thou should'st listen to him ; so to thee
 Should he attend, as best may profit both.

CREON.

And have we liv'd so long then to be taught
 At last our duty by a boy like thee ?

HÆMON.

Young though I am, I still may judge aright ;
 Wisdom in action lies, and not in years.

CREON.

Call you it wisdom then to honour those
 Who disobey the laws ?

HÆMON.

I would not have thee
 Protect the wicked.

CREON.

Is she not most guilty ?

HÆMON.

Thebes doth not think her so.

CREON.

Shall Thebes prescribe
 To Creon's will ?

HÆMON.

How weakly dost thou talk !

CREON.

Am I king here, or shall another reign ?

HÆMON.

'Tis not a city where but one man rules.

CREON.

The city is the king's.

HÆMON.

Go by thyself, then,
And rule henceforth o'er a deserted land.

CREON, *to the Chorus.*

He pleads the woman's cause.

HÆMON.

If thou art she,
I do ; for, O, I speak but for thy sake ;
My care is all for thee.

CREON.

Abandon'd wretch !
Dispute a father's will !

HÆMON.

I see thee err,
And therefore do it.

CREON.

Is it then a crime
To guard my throne and rights from violation ?

HÆMON.

He cannot guard them, who contemns the gods,
And violates their laws.

CREON.

O, thou art worse,
More impious e'en than her thou hast defended.

HÆMON.

Nought have I done to merit this reproof.

CREON.

Hast thou not pleaded for her?

HÆMON.

No; for thee,
And for myself; for the infernal gods.

CREON.

But know, she shall not live to be thy wife.

HÆMON.

Then she must die; another too may fall.

CREON.

Ha! dost thou threaten me? audacious traitor.

HÆMON.

What are my threats? alas! thou heed'st them not.

CREON.

That thou shalt see; thy insolent instruction
Shall cost thee dear.

HÆMON.

But for thou art my father,
Now would I say thy senses were impair'd.

CREON.

Think not to make me thus thy scorn and laughter,
Thou woman's slave.

HÆMON.

Still would'st thou speak thyself,
And never listen to the voice of truth;
Such is thy will.

CREON.

Now by Olympus here
I swear, thy vile reproaches shall not pass
Unpunish'd; call her forth: before her bridegroom
(*to one of the attendants*)

She shall be brought, and perish in his sight.

HÆMON.

These eyes shall never see it: let the slaves
Who fear thy rage submit to it; but know,
'Tis the last time thou shalt behold thy son. [Exit.]

SCENE II.

CREON, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Sudden in anger fled the youth; O, king,
A mind oppress'd like his is desperate.

CREON.

Why, let him go; and henceforth better learn
Than to oppose me; be it as it may,
Death is their portion, and he shall not save them.

CHORUS.

Must they both die, then?

CREON.

No; 'tis well advis'd,
Ismene lives; but for Antigone—

CHORUS.

O king, what death is she decreed to suffer?

CREON.

Far from the haunts of men I'll have her led,
And in a rocky cave, beneath the earth,
Buried alive; with her a little food,

With her a little food. To destroy any one by famine was looked on by the Grecians as impious; probably (as is observed by the scholiast on this passage) because it reflected disgrace on any country to suffer its inhabitants to perish by

Enough to save the city from pollution ;
 There let her pray the only god she worships
 To save her from this death : perhaps he will,
 Or if he doth not, let her learn how vain
 It is to reverence the powers below. [Exit.]

SCENE III.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Mighty power, all powers above,
 Great unconquerable Love !
 Thou, who liest in dimple sleek
 On the tender virgin's cheek,
 Thee the rich and great obey,
 Ev'ry creature owns thy sway.
 O'er the wide earth and o'er the main
 Extends thy universal reign ;
 All thy madd'ning influence know,
 Gods above, and men below ;
 All thy powers resistless prove,
 Great unconquerable Love !

ANTISTROPHE I.

Thou can'st lead the just astray
 From wisdom and from virtue's way ;
 The ties of nature cease to bind,
 When thou disturb'st the captive mind.
 Behold, enslav'd by fond desire,

hunger ; when they buried persons alive, therefore, it was customary to give them a small quantity of victuals, that the city might escape pollution.

The youth contemns his aged sire,
 Enamour'd of his beauteous maid,
 Nor laws nor parents are obey'd;
 Thus Venus wills it from above,
 And great unconquerable love.

CHORUS.

E'en I, beyond the common bounds of grief,
 Indulge my sorrows, and from these sad eyes
 Fountains of tears will flow, when I behold
 Antigone, unhappy maid, approach
 The bed of death, and hasten to the tomb.

SCENE IV.

ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

ANTIGONE.

Farewell, my friends, my countrymen, farewell !
 Here, on her last sad journey, you behold
 The poor Antigone ; for never more
 Shall I return, or view the light of day :
 The hand of death conducts me to the shore
 Of dreary Acheron ; no nuptial song
 Reserv'd for me, the wretched bride alone
 Of Pluto now, and wedded to the tomb.

CHORUS.

Be it thy glory still, that by the sword
 Thou fall'st not, nor the slow-consuming hand
 Of foul distemp'rature, but far distinguish'd
 Above thy sex, and to thyself a law,
 Doom'st thy own death, so shall thy honour live,
 And future ages venerate thy name.

ANTIGONE.

Thus Tantalus' unhappy daughter fell,
 The Phrygian Niobe; high on the top
 Of tow'ring Sipylus the rock enfolds her,
 E'en as the ivy twines her tendrils round
 The lofty oak, there still (as fame reports)
 To melting showers, and everlasting snow
 Obvious she stands, her beauteous bosom wet
 With tears, that from her ever-streaming eyes
 Incessant flow; her fate resembles mine.

CHORUS.

A goddess she, and from a goddess sprung;
 We are but mortal, and of mortals born:
 To meet the fate of gods thus in thy life,
 And in thy death, O, 'tis a glorious doom.

ANTIGONE.

Alas! thou mock'st me! why, whilst yet I live,
 Would'st thou afflict me with reproach like this?
 O, my dear country, and my dearer friends
 Its blest inhabitants, renowned Thebes!
 And ye Dircæan fountains, you I call
 To witness, that I die by laws unjust,
 To my deep prison unlamented go,
 To my sad tomb, no fellow-suff'rer there
 To soothe my woes, the living, or the dead.

CHORUS.

Rashness like thine must meet with such reward;
 A father's crimes, I fear, lie heavy on thee.

ANTIGONE.

Oh! thou hast touch'd my worst of miseries!

The Phrygian Niobe. The story of Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, changed into a rock, is too well known to need any explanation. See *Ovid's Metam.* b. 6.

My father's fate, the woes of all our house,
 The wretched race of Labdacus, renown'd
 For its misfortunes ! O, the guilty bed
 Of those from whom I sprang ; unhappy offspring
 Of parents most unhappy ! lo ! to them
 I go accurs'd ; a virgin and a slave.
 O, my poor brother ! most unfortunate
 Were thy sad nuptials ; they have slain thy sister.

CHORUS.

Thy piety demands our praise ; but know,
 Authority is not to be despised ;
 'Twas thy own rashness brought destruction on
 thee.

ANTIGONE.

Thus friendless, unlamented, must I tread
 The destin'd path, no longer to behold
 Yon sacred light, and none shall mourn my fate.

SCENE V.

CREON, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

CREON.

Know ye not, slaves like her to death devoted
 Would never cease their wailings ? wherefore is it
 You thus delay to execute my orders ?
 Let her be carried instant to the cave,
 And leave her there alone, to live, or die ;

Thy sad nuptials. Polynices married the daughter of Adrastus, who, in defence of his son-in-law, led his Argians against Thebes : thus his marriage was the cause of his death, and the decree against Antigone consequent upon it.

Her blood rests not on us : but she no longer
Shall breathe on earth. [Exit.]

SCENE VI.

ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

ANTIGONE.

O, dreadful marriage-bed !

O, my deep dungeon ! my eternal home,
Whither I go to join my kindred dead !
For not a few hath fell Persephone
Already ta'en ; to her I go, the last
And most unhappy, e'er my time was come ;
But still I have sweet hope I shall not go
Unwelcome to my father, nor to thee,
My mother ; dear to thee, Eteocles,
Still shall I ever be , these pious hands
Wash'd your pale bodies, and adorn'd you both
With rites sepulchral, and libations due :
And thus, my Polynices, for my care
Of thee am I rewarded, and the good
Alone shall praise me : for a husband dead,
Nor, had I been a mother, for my children
Would I have dared to violate the laws ;
Another husband and another child
Might soothe affliction ; but, my parents dead,
A brother's loss could never be repair'd,
And therefore did I dare the vent'rous deed,
And therefore die by Creon's dread command.
Ne'er shall I taste of Hymen's joys, or know
A mother's pleasures in her infant race ;

But friendless and forlorn alive descend
 Into the dreary mansions of the dead :
 And how have I offended the just gods !
 But wherefore call on them ! will they protect me,
 When thus I meet with the reward of ill
 For doing good ? if this be just, ye gods,
 If I am guilty let me suffer for it ;
 But if the crime be theirs, O, let them feel
 That weight of mis'ry they have laid on me.

CHORUS.

The storm continues, and her angry soul
 Still pours its sorrows forth.

SCENE VII.

CREON, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

CREON.

The slaves shall suffer
 For this delay.

ANTIGONE.

Alas ! death cannot be
 Far from that voice.

CREON.

I would not have thee hope
 A moment's respite.

ANTIGONE.

O, my country's gods !
 And thou, my native Thebes, I leave you now.
 Look on me, princes, see the last of all
 My royal race, see what I suffer, see

From whom I bear it, from the worst of men,
Only because I did delight in virtue. [Exit Creon.]

SCENE VIII.

ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Remember what fair Danae endur'd,
Condemn'd to change heaven's cheerful light
For scenes of horror and of night,
Within a brazen tow'r long time immur'd ;
Yet was the maid of noblest race,
And honour'd e'en with Jove's embrace ;
But O, when fate decrees a mortal's woe,
Nought can reverse the doom, or stop the blow,
Nor heaven above, nor earth and seas below.

ANTISTROPHE I.

The Thracian monarch, Dryas' hapless son,

Remember what, &c. The chorus, as dependants on Creon, could neither defend nor assist Antigone, they can only lament those misfortunes which it was not in their power to remove; they endeavour therefore to assuage her grief by the invention of other illustrious persons, whom they compare with her, not in their guilt but in their sufferings.

Fair Danae. Aericius, king of the Argives, having been warned by an oracle, that he should be slain by his grandson, shut up his daughter Danae in a brazen tower; Jupiter, however, according to the poets, gained access to her by transforming himself into a golden shower. Horace has applied this fiction with his usual elegance. See book 3, od. 16.

The Thracian monarch. Lycurgus, king of Thrace, for contemning, or disturbing the rites of Bacchus, was, according to Sophocles, chained to a rock, where he perished. Homer punishes him with blindness. See the Iliad, b. 7.

Chain'd to a rock in torment lay,
 And breath'd his angry soul away,
 By wrath misguided, and by pride undone ;
 Taught by th' offended god to know
 From foul reproach what evils flow ;
 For he the rites prophan'd with sland'rous tongue,
 The holy flame he quench'd, disturb'd the song,
 And wak'd to wrath the muses' tuneful throng.

STROHPE II.

His turbid waves where Salmydessus roll'd,
 And proud Cyanea's rocks divide the flood,
 There from thy temple, Mars, didst thou behold
 The sons of Phineus welt'ring in their blood ;
 A mother did the cruel deed,
 A mother bade her children bleed ; .
 Both, by her impious hand, depriv'd of light,
 In vain lamented long their ravish'd sight,
 And clos'd their eyes in never-ending night.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Long time they wept a better mother's fate,
 Unhappy offspring of a luckless bed !
 Yet nobly born, and eminently great
 Was she, and mid'st sequester'd caverns bred,
 Her father's angry storms among,
 Daughter of gods, from Boreas sprung ;
 Equal in swiftness to the bounding steed,

Salmydessus, &c. Salmydessus was a river in Thrace, near which was a temple dedicated to Mars. The Cyaneæ were two rocks, or small islands near the Thracian Bosphorus.

The sons of Phineus. Flexippus and Pandion, whose eyes were put out by their step-mother Idæa, the wife of Phineus, after the death of their own mother Cleopatra, the daughter of Boreas and Orithyia, whose fate is alluded to in the latter part of the ode.

She skimm'd the mountains with a courser's speed,
Yet was the nymph to death and misery decreed.

[*Exeunt.*

A C T I V.

SCENE I.

TIRESIAS, GUIDE, CREON, CHORUS.

TIRESIAS.

Princes of Thebes, behold, conducted hither
By my kind guide, (such is the blind man's fate,)
Tiresias comes.

CREON.

O venerable prophet,
What hast thou to impart?

TIRESIAS.

I will inform thee ;
Observe, and be obedient.

CREON.

Have I not
Been ever so ?

Princes of Thebes. The name Anaktes, or princes, among the Greeks, was given not only to sovereigns, but frequently to the principal and most honourable members of the commonwealth ; Tiresias, we see, compliments the ancient citizens of Thebes, who composed the chorus, with this title.

TIRESIAS.

Thou hast ; and therefore Thebes
Hath flourish'd still——

CREON.

By thy protecting hand.

TIRESIAS.

Therefore be wise ; for know, this very hour
Is the important crisis of thy fate.

CREON.

Speak then, what is it ? how I dread thy words !

TIRESIAS.

When thou hast heard the portents which my art
But now discover'd, thou wilt see it all.
Know then, that sitting on my ancient throne
Augurial, whence each divination comes,
Sudden a strange unusual noise was heard
Of birds, whose loud and barb'rous dissonance
I knew not how t' interpret ; by the sound
Of clashing wings, I could discover well
That with their bloody claws they tore each other ;
Amaz'd and fearful, instantly I tried
On burning altars holy sacrifice ;
When, from the victim, lo ! the sullen flame
Aspir'd not ; smother'd in the ashes still
Lay the moist flesh, and, roll'd in smoke repell'd,
The rising fire, whilst from their fat the thighs
Were sep'rate ; all these signs of deadly omen,
Boding dark vengeance, did I learn from him ;

(*pointing to the guide*)

He is my leader, king, and I am thine.
Then mark me well ; from thee these evils flow,
From thy unjust decree ; our altars all
Have been polluted by th' unhallow'd food

Of birds and dogs, that prey'd upon the corse
 Of wretched Oedipus' unhappy son ;
 Nor will the gods accept our offer'd prayers,
 Or from our hands receive the sacrifice ;
 No longer will the birds send forth their sounds
 Auspicious; fatten'd thus with human blood.
 Consider this, my son ; and, O, remember,
 To err is human ; 'tis the common lot
 Of frail mortality ; and he alone
 Is wise and happy, who when ills are done
 Persists not, but would heal the wound he made ;
 But self-sufficient obstinacy ever
 Is folly's utmost height : where is the glory
 To slay the slain, or persecute the dead ?
 I wish thee well, and therefore have spoke thus ;
 When those, who love, advise, 'tis sweet to learn.

CREON.

I know, old man, I am the gen'ral mark,
 The butt of all, and you all aim at me :
 For me I know your prophecies were made,
 And I am sold to this detested race ;
 Betray'd to them ✓ but make your gains ; go, pur-
 chase
 Your Sardian amber, and your Indian gold ;
 They shall not buy a tomb for Polynices :
 No, should the eagle seek him for his food,
 And tow'ring bear him to the throne of Jove,
 I would not bury him ; for well I know,
 The gods by mortals cannot be polluted ;

Your Sardian amber. Sardis was a principal city of Lydia, near the river Pactolus, celebrated in the fables of antiquity for what it never had, sands of gold; Sophocles calls it elektron, or amber, probably on account of its transparency.

But the best men, by sordid gain corrupt,
Say all that's ill, and fall beneath the lowest.

TIRESIAS.

Who knows this, or who dare accuse us of it?

CREON.

What mean'st thou by that question? ask'st thou
who?

TIRESIAS.

How far is wisdom beyond ev'ry good?

CREON.

As far as folly beyond ev'ry ill.

TIRESIAS.

That's a distemper thou'rt afflicted with.

CREON.

I'll not revile a prophet.

TIRESIAS.

But thou dost;

Thou'l not believe me.

CREON.

Your prophetic race
Are lovers all of gold.

TIRESIAS.

Tyrants are so,

Howe'er ill-gotten.

CREON.

Know'st thou 'tis a king
Thou'rt talking thus to?

TIRESIAS.

Yes, I know it well;

A king, who owes to me his country's safety.

CREON.

Thou'rt a wise prophet, but thou art unjust.

TIRESIAS.

Thou wilt oblige me then to utter that
Which I had purpos'd to conceal.

CREON.

Speak out,

Say what thou wilt, but say it not for hire.

TIRESIAS.

Thus may it seem to thee.

CREON.

But know, old man,

I am not to be sold.

TIRESIAS.

Remember this :

Not many days shall the bright sun perform
His stated course, e'er sprung from thy own loins
Thyself shall yield a victim, in thy turn
Thou too shalt weep, for that thy cruel sentence
Decreed a guiltless virgin to the tomb,
And kept on earth, unmindful of the gods,
Ungraced, unburied, an unhallow'd corse,
Which not to thee, nor to the gods above
Of right belong'd ; 'twas arbitrary power :
But the avenging furies lie conceal'd,
The ministers of death have spread the snare,
And with like woes await to punish thee ;
Do I say this from hopes of promis'd gold ?
Pass but a little time, and thou shalt hear
The shrieks of men, the women's loud laments

Nor to the gods above, &c. The heathen deities were divided into the superi, and the inferi, the gods above, and the gods below ; to the latter of these, the infernal powers, belonged the care of the dead, whom Creon had offended by refusing burial to the corpse of Polynices.

O'er all thy palace ; see th' offended people
 Together rage ; thy cities all by dogs
 And beasts and birds polluted, and the stench
 Of filth obscene on ev'ry altar laid.
 Thus from my angry soul have I sent forth
 Its keenest arrows (for thou hast provok'd me)
 Nor shall they fly in vain, or thou escape
 The destin'd blow : now, boy, conduct me home ;
 On younger heads the tempest of his rage
 Shall fall ; but, henceforth let him learn to speak
 In humbler terms, and bear a better mind. [Exit.]

SCENE II.

CREON, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

He's gone, and dreadful were his prophecies ;
 Since these grey hairs were o'er my temples spread,
 Nought from those lips hath flow'd but sacred truth.

CREON.

I know there hath not, and am troubled much
 For the event : 'tis grating to submit,
 And yet the mind spite of itself must yield
 In such distress.

CHORUS.

Son of Menœceus, now
 Thou need'st good counsel.

CREON.

What would'st thou advise ?
 will obey thee.

CHORUS.

Set the virgin free,
And let a tomb be rais'd for Polynices.

CREON.

And dost thou counsel thus? and must I yield?

CHORUS.

Immediately, O king, for vengeance falls
With hasty footsteps on the guilty head.

CREON.

I cannot; yet I must reverse the sentence;
There is no struggling with necessity.

CHORUS.

Do it thyself, nor trust another hand.

CREON.

I will; and you, my servants, be prepar'd;
Each with his axe quick hasten to the place;
Myself, (for thus I have resolved,) will go,
And the same hand that bound shall set her free;
For, O, I fear 'tis wisest still through life
To keep our ancient laws, and follow virtue.

SCENE III.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Bacchus, by various names to mortals known,

Bacchus, by various names, &c. This Chorus may be considered as an image of the ancient Greek tragedy, which in its first rude state was no more than what we here meet with, a hymn to Bacchus. The old men, affrighted at the predictions of Tiresias denouncing misery to Thebes, address themselves

Fair Semele's illustrious son,
 Offspring of thunder-bearing Jove,
 Who honour'st fam'd Italia with thy love !
 Who dwell'st where erst the dragon's teeth were
 strow'd,
 Or where Ismenus pours his gentle flood ;
 Who dost o'er Ceres' hallow'd rites preside,
 And at thy native Thebes propitious still reside.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Where fam'd Parnassus' forked hills arise,
 To thee ascends the sacrifice ;
 Corycia's nymphs attend below,
 Whilst from Castalia's fount fresh waters flow :
 O'er Nysa's mountains wreaths of ivy twine,
 And mix their tendrils with the clust'ring vine :
 Around their master crowd the virgin throng,
 And praise the god of Thebes in never-dying song.

STROPHE II.

Happiest of cities, Thebes ! above the rest

to that god as their tutelary deity : the whole ode is in the original to the last degree beautiful, and written with the true spirit and genius of antiquity.

Fair Semele's illustrious son, &c. Bacchus was generally reputed a Theban, and supposed by the poets to be the son of Jupiter, by Semele, the daughter of Cadmus ; he had several names, as Lyæus, Euius, Lenæus, Bromius, Eleleus, and many others. Italy is mentioned as his favourite country, on account of the number of vines growing there. He was worshipped together with Ceres in the Eleusinian mysteries.

Corycia's nymphs. The muses, so called from Corycium at the foot of mount Parnassus.

Nysa's mountains. Parnassus is described by the poets as having two tops, one called Cirrha, sacred to Apollo, the other Nysa, sacred to Bacchus : there was also a city in Arcadia of this name, where Bacchus was nursed.

By Semele and Bacchus blest !
O, visit now thy once belov'd abode,
O, heal our woes, thou kind protecting god !
From steep Parnassus, or th' Eubœan sea,
With smiles auspicious come, and bring with thee
Health, joy and peace, and fair prosperity.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Immortal leader of the madd'ning choir,
Whose torches blaze with unextinguish'd fire,
Great son of Jove, who guid'st the tuneful throng,
Thou, who presidest o'er the nightly song,
Come with thy Naxian maids, a festive train,
Who wild with joy, and raging o'er the plain,
For thee the dance prepare, to thee devote the
strain.

[*Exeunt.*]

Naxian maids. Naxos was one of the Cyclades, islands in the Archipelago famous for its vines : of the nymphs of Naxos, called Thyades, or Mænades, it is reported that they ran wild and frantic about the woods, with each a torch or thyrsus in her hand, singing the praises of Bacchus ; Sophocles calls them, therefore, ‘the madd'ning choir.’

ACT V.

SCENE I.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

Ye race of Cadmus, sons of ancient Thebes,
Henceforth no state of human life by me
Shall be or valu'd or despis'd ; for all
Depends on fortune ; she exalts the low,
And casts the mighty down ; the fate of men
Can never be foretold : there was a time
When Creon liv'd in envied happiness,
Rul'd o'er renowned Thebes, which from lie' foes
He had deliver'd, with successful power ;
Blest in his kingdom, in his children blest,
He stretch'd o'er all his universal sway ;
Now all is gone : when pleasure is no more,
Man is but as an animated corse,
Nor can be said to live ; he may be rich,
Or deck'd with regal honours ; but if joy
Be absent from him, if he tastes them not,
'Tis useless grandeur all, and empty shade.

CHORUS.

Touching our royal master bring'st thou news
Of sorrow to us ?

MESSENGER.

They are dead ; and those,
Who live, the dreadful cause.

CHORUS.

Quick, tell us who,
The slayer and the slain ?

MESSENGER.

Hæmon is dead.

CHORUS.

Dead ! by what hand, his father's or his own ?

MESSENGER.

Enrag'd, and grieving for his murder'd love,
He slew himself.

CHORUS.

O prophet, thy predictions
Were but too true !

MESSENGER.

Since thus it be, 'tis fit
We should consult ; our prescnt state demands it.

CHORUS.

But, see, Eurydice the wretched wife
Of Creon comes this way ; or chance hath brought
her,
Or Hæmon's hapless fate hath reach'd her ear.

SCENE II.

EURYDICE, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

EURYDICE.

O, citizens, as to Minerva's fane
E'en now I went to pay my vows, the doors

A a 2

I burst, and heard imperfectly the sound
Of most disast'rous news which touch'd me near.
Breathless I fell amidst the virgin throng,
And now I come to know the dreadful truth ;
Whate'er it be, I'll hear it now ; for, O,
I am no stranger to calamity.

MESSENGER.

Then mark, my mistress, I will tell thee all,
Nor will I pass a circumstance unmention'd.
Should I deceive thee with an idle tale
'Twere soon discover'd ; truth is always best.
Know, then, I follow'd Creon to the field,
Where torn by dogs the wretched carcase lay
Of Polynices, (first to Proserpine
And angry Pluto, to appease their wrath,
Our humble prayers addressing) there we lav'd
In the pure stream the body, then with leaves
Fresh gather'd cov'ring burnt his poor remains,
And on the neighb'ring turf a tomb uprais'd ;
Then tow'rds the virgin's rocky cave advanc'd,
When from the dreadful chamber a sad cry
As from afar was heard, a servant ran
To tell the king, and still as we approach'd,
The sound of sorrow from a voice unknown
And undistinguish'd issued forth. Alas !
Said Creon, am I then a faithful prophet ?
And do I tread a more unhappy path
Than e'er I went before ? It is my son,
I know his voice : but get ye to the door,
My servants, close, look through the stony heap,
Mark if it be so ; is it Hæmon's voice,
Again he cried, or have the gods deceiv'd me ?
Thus spoke the king : we, to our mournful lord

Obedient, look'd, and saw Antigone
Down in the deepest hollow of the cave
By her own vestments hung ; close by her side
The wretched youth embracing in his arms
Her lifeless corse, weeping his father's crime,
His ravish'd bride, and horrid nuptial bed.
Creon beheld, and loud approaching cried,
What art thou doing ? what's thy dreadful purpose ?
What means my son ? Come forth, my Hæmon,
come,
Thy father begs thee ; with indignant eye
The youth look'd up, nor scornful deign'd an answer,
But silent drew his sword, and with fell rage
Struck at his father, who by flight escap'd
The blow, then on himself bent all his wrath,
Full in his side the weapon fix'd, but still,
Whilst life remain'd, on the soft bosom hung
Of the dear maid, and his last spirit breath'd
O'er her pale cheek, discolour'd with his blood.
Thus lay the wretched pair in death united,
And celebrate their nuptials in the tomb,
To future times a terrible example
Of the sad woes which rashness ever brings.

[*Exit Eurydice.*

SCENE III.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

What can this mean ? she's gone, without a word.

MESSENGER.

'Tis strange, and yet I trust she will not loud
Proclaim her griefs to all, but, for I know
She's ever prudent, with her virgin train
In secret weep her murder'd Hæmon's fate.

CHORUS.

Clamour indeed were vain ; but such deep silence
Doth ever threaten horrid consequence.

MESSENGER.

Within we soon shall know if aught she hide
Of deadly purport in her angry soul ;
For well thou say'st her silence is most dreadful.

[Exit.]

CHORUS.

But, lo ! the king himself, and in his arms
See his dead son, the monument accurst
Of his sad fate, which, may we say unblamed,
Sprang not from others' guilt but from his own.

SCENE IV.

CREON, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

(*Creon enters bearing the body of Hæmon.*)

CREON.

Ah me ! what deadly woes from the bad mind
Perpetual flow ; thus in one wretched house
Have you beheld the slayer and the slain !
O fatal counsels ! O unhappy son !
Thus with thy youthful bride to sink in death ;
Thou diest, my child, and I alone have kill'd thee.

CHORUS.

O king, thy justice comes too late.

CREON.

It doth,

I know it well, unhappy as I am ;
 For, O, the god this heavy weight of wo
 Hath cast upon me, and his fiercest wrath
 Torments me now, changing my joyful state
 To keenest anguish ; O, the fruitless toils
 Of wretched mortals !

SCENE V.

MESSENGER, CREON, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

Thus oppress'd, my lord,
 With bitterest misfortune, more affliction
 Awaits thee still, which thou wilt find within.

CREON.

And can there be more woes ? is aught to come
 More horrible than this ?

MESSENGER.

The queen is dead ;
 Her wounds yet fresh, eager, alas ! to show
 A mother's love, she follow'd her lost child.

CREON.

O death insatiate ! how dost thou afflict me !
 What cruel news, thou messenger of ill,
 Hast thou brought now ?

CHORUS.

A wretch, already dead

With grief, thy horrid tale once more hath slain.

CREON.

Didst thou not say a fresh calamity

Had fallen upon me? didst not say my wife

Was dead, alas! for grief of Hæmon's fate?

(*Scene opens and discovers the body of Eurydice*)

MESSENGER.

Behold her there.

CREON.

O me! another blow!

What now remains? what can I suffer more,

Thus bearing in these arms my breathless son?

My wife too dead! O most unhappy mother.

And, O, thou wretched child!

MESSENGER.

Close by the altar

She drew the sword, and clos'd her eyes in death,

Lamenting first her lost Megareus' fate

And Hæmon's death, with imprecations dire

Still pour'd on thee, the murderer of thy son.

CREON.

I shudder at it: will no friendly hand

Destroy me quick? for, O, I am most wretched;

Beset with mis'ries!

MESSENGER.

She accus'd thee oft,

And said the guilt of both their deaths was thine.

CREON.

Alas! I only am to blame; 'twas I

Who kill'd thee, Hæmon; I confess my crime;

Megareus' fate. Megareus was the first husband of Eurydice,

Bear me, my servants, bear me far from hence
For I am—nothing.

CHORUS.

If in ills like these
Aught can be well, thou hast determin'd right;
When least we see our woes, we feel them least;

CREON.

Quick let my last, my happiest hour appear ;
Would it were come, the period of my woes !
O, that I might not see another day !

CHORUS.

Time must determine that : the present hour
Demands our care ; the rest be left to Heaven.

CREON.

But I have wish'd and pray'd for't.

CHORUS.

Pray for nothing ;
There's no reversing the decrees of fate.

CREON.

Take hence this useless load, this guilty wretch
Who slew his child, who slew e'en thee, my wife ;
I know not whither to betake me, where
To turn my eyes, for all is dreadful round me,
And fate hath weigh'd me down on every side.

CHORUS.

Wisdom alone is man's true happiness ;
We are not to dispute the will of heav'n ;
For ever are the boastings of the proud
By the just gods repaid, and man at last
Is taught to fear their anger, and be wise.

SELECTIONS
FROM THE
TRAGEDIES
OF
EURIPIDES.

TRANSLATED

BY R. POTTER.

VOL. L.

b b

LIFE OF EURIPIDES.

THE prodigious armament, with which Xerxes invaded Greece, is well known: when he was advancing towards Attica, to revenge the defeat of his father's forces, at Marathon, the Athenians, by the advice of Themistocles retired with their effects to Salamis, Trœzene, and Ægina. Among those, who took refuge at Salamis, were Mnesarchus and Clito, the parents of Euripides, who was born in that island on the very day in which the Grecians there gained that memorable victory over the Persian fleet. From the best authorities we learn that his parents were persons of rank and fortune; particularly that his mother was of very noble birth; for no regard is due to Aristophanes, who spared no good man, and who hated Euripides. They educated their son with great attention, and at a considerable expense: besides the athletic exercises, in which he excelled, he was taught grammar, music, and painting; in this enchanting art he made a great proficiency, particularly in historical picture, and first designed the figure of Agamemnon at the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the execution of which has rendered the name of Timanthes immortal. He now applied himself to the study of oratory under

the refined and learned Prodicus, who admitted none to his school but the sons of great and noble families ; the celebrated Pericles was also formed under this excellent master, who is well known from his elegant and instructive fable, the judgment of Hercules, which some years ago was adorned with all the graces of English poetry ; from this school Euripides derived that copious stream of eloquence which flows through all his writings, and which rendered him the poet of orators ; Demosthenes was so sensible of his superior excellence in this, that he studied him with peculiar attention ; Cicero held him in the highest estimation even to his last moments, for when those that murdered him came up to his litter, they found him reading the Medea of this author ; and Quintilian recommends him to the real orator as a more useful model than either the sublime and daring Æschylus, or the grave and majestic Sophocles. About this time Anaxagoras of Clazomene transferred the school of Thales from Ionia to Athens ; this truly great man exploded the doctrines of fate and chance, and acknowledging a God incorporeal, eternal, and of infinite wisdom, ascribed the creation of all things, motion, and order, to pure and perfect intellect : he seemed formed to enlighten the world, but the darkness was too thick to be dispelled by less than divine power ; an important truth, which Socrates soon after saw and acknowledged. The grave and contemplative mind of Euripides was peculiarly formed for these sublime inquiries ; he therefore no more attended the Gymnasium, but applied himself entirely to those studies under Anaxagoras, till this philosopher was accused of impiety for saying that the sun was a burning mass of fire ; Pericles generously defended his master, and by his eloquence and interest prevailed so far that the sentence of death was

softened to a fine and banishment. Euripides, perceiving the danger of attempting to emancipate reason from the slavery of received opinions, and unwilling to give up his studious course of life, turned his thoughts to the drama, ambitious of some share of that glory which Æschylus had already acquired, and Sophocles was then acquiring. He was very young when he engaged in this undertaking, but he had every qualification which could ensure success : devoted from his early years to literature, educated under the best masters, conversant in the deepest philosophy and the sublimest studies, an exact observer of men and manners, tender and even melancholy in his disposition, alive to all the finest feelings of humanity, and uniformly virtuous in his life, as if nature and art had vied with each other to form this excellent man, it is no wonder that he soon became the delight and ornament of his country ; and, what perhaps is a more solid honour to him, he contracted an early friendship with Socrates, who was twelve years younger than himself, and survived him almost six years ; this friendship, formed on the firmest principles of virtue and wisdom, and cemented by a similarity of manners and studies, continued indissoluble. These studies form the history of his life from the eighteenth to the seventy-second year of his age, during which time he composed seventy-five tragedies, frequently retiring to his native Salamis, and there indulging his melancholy muse in a rude and gloomy cavern.

His reputation was now so illustrious, that Archelaus, king of Macedonia, invited him to his court : this monarch, to his many royal virtues, added a fondness for literature and the muses, and had drawn to him from Greece many who excelled in the polite arts, particularly those who were eminent for their learning, philosophers and poets;

Euripides, after much and earnest invitation, at length complied with the king's request, and went to Pella, where he was received with every mark of esteem and honour. Archelaus knew how to value a man of modesty and learning, a lover of truth and virtue; but he particularly admired the disinterestedness, the amiable candour, and gentleness of manners, which distinguished Euripides, and made him worthy of the liberality, the esteem, and the affection of such a king. In this court at this time, among many other eminent men, were Agatho, an excellent tragic poet, an honest and agreeable man, a friend and admirer of Euripides, Timotheus, the famous musician, and Teuxus the celebrated painter; in this society Euripides lived happy, beloved, and honoured, and died lamented, in the third year after his coming to Macedonia, and the seventy-fifth year of his age. Archelaus mourned for him as for a near relation, buried him among the kings of Macedonia, and erected a magnificent monument to his memory.

The news of his death was brought to Athens as Sophocles was about to exhibit one of his tragedies; he appeared in mourning, and made his actors come on the stage without crowns: this great poet had long been the intimate friend of Euripides, he was then in the ninetieth year of his age, and died about the end of this year. The Athenians immediately sent ambassadors to Archelaus, requesting his permission to remove the bones of Euripides into his own country; this the king and the Macedonians firmly refused; as they could not obtain his ashes, they raised a cœnotaph to their poet, in the way that led from the city to the Piræus.

THE BACCHÆ.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

BACCHUS.

TIRESIAS.

CADMUS.

PENTHEUS.

AGAVE.

OFFICER.

MESSENGERS.

CHORUS OF ASIATIC BACCHÆ.

THE
BACCHÆ.

THIS tragedy is of a singular nature, and very different from any thing that remains to us of the Athenian theatre : the best critics have ranked it among the finest tragedies of Euripides, and in respect of its composition it is so ; but to us it is the least interesting of any of them ; for we cannot so far assume the prejudices and sentiments of a Grecian audience as to be affected with a story of their Bacchus and his frantic Mænades ; yet we can be sensible to fine writing, and the distress of Cadmus and Agave in the last scene is touched with a masterly hand. But it is peculiarly valuable for its learning, as it gives us the best account now extant of the Orgies of Bacchus ; those rites, even to the dress and manners of the Bacchæ, are so particularly described, that later and even cotemporary writers seem to have taken their accounts of them from hence ; so that it would be an absurd affectation to burden the page with unnecessary notes. The first choral Ode is truly tragic in the original

acceptation of the word, and not only remarkable for the elegance of its composition, but precious as a religious relique, all that remains to us of those songs in honour of Bacchus, from whence tragedy derived its origin and its name : the religious air, with which it is prefaced, gives it a solemnity, and in a manner hallows the whole drama.

The scene is at Thebes before the vestibule of the palace of Pentheus.

THE
BACCHÆ.

BACCHUS.

NOW to this land, the realms of Thebes, I come,
Bacchus, the son of Jove, whom Semele,
Daughter of Cadmus, 'midst the lightning flames
Brought forth; the god beneath a mortal's form
Concealing, on the brink of Dirce's fount,
And where Ismenus rolls his stream, I tread.
I see my mother's tomb rais'd near the house
In which she perish'd by the thunder; yet
Its ruins smoke, th' ethereal fire yet lives,
The everlasting mark of Juno's hate
Wreck'd on my mother. Cadmus hath my praise,
Who to his daughter rais'd this shrine, the ground
Hallow'd from vulgar tread: the clust'ring vine
I gave to wreath around its verdant boughs.
Leaving the Lydian fields profuse of gold,
The Phrygian, and the Persian plains expos'd
To the sun's rays, and from the tower'd forte
Of Bactria passing, from the frozen soil
Of Media, from Arabia the blest,

And all that traet of Asia which along
The salt sea lies, where with Barbarians mix'd
The Grecians many a stately-structur'd town
Inhabit, to this city, first of Greece,
I come, here lead my dance, my mystic rites
Establish here, that mortals may confess
The manifcst god. Of all the realms of Grecia
In Thebcs I first have rais'd my shouts, thus cloath'd
With a fawn's dappled hide, and in my hand
The thyrsus hold, this ivy-wrcathed spear :
For that the sisters of my mother (Icast
Becomes it them) declared that not from Jove
I sprung, but pregnant by some mortal's love
That Semele on Jove had falsely charg'd
Her fault, the poor device of Cadmus; whence
They arrogantly said that Jove enraged
Slew her, because she falsely urged his love
As her excuse : for this my madd'ning strings
Impell'd them to forsake the house, and roam
Distracted o'er the mountain, where perforce
They wcar the habit of my orgies. All
The females, who from Cadmus draw their birth,
Have I driv'n frantic from their houses forth ;
And with the sons of Cadmus mix'd beneath
The dark-greecn firs, whose boughs o'er-roof the
rocks,
They sit. This city must be taught to know,
Howe'er avcrse, that with my mystic rites
She is not hallow'd, and that I defcnd
The cause of Semele, to mortal men
Avow'd a god, the sun of thund'ring Jove.
Cadmus his honours and imperial state
Resigns to Pentheus, from his daughter sprung :

He with profane contempt against me wars,
 Drives me from the libations, in his vows
 Deems me not worthy mention : for which cause
 To him, and all the Thebans, will I show
 Myself a god. Things well appointed here,
 Hence to some other realm will I remove,
 And show myself : but should the Theban state
 In rage attempt with hostile arms to drive
 My Bacchæ from their confines, I will lead
 My Mænades, and lead them to the fight.
 For this have I put off my god-like form,
 Taking the semblance of a mortal man.
 But you, my frolic train, who left the heights
 Of Tmolus, Lydian mount, ye female troop,
 Whom from barbaric coasts I led with me
 Associates, and attendants on my march,
 Resume your Phrygian tymbrels framed by me
 And mother Rhea, round the royal house
 Of Pentheus let their hoarse notes roar, that Thebes
 May see you. To Cithæron's heights I go,
 And with my circling Bacchæ join the dance.

CHORUS.

PROSODE.

From Tmolus, whose majestic brow
 Views Asia stretching wide below,
 Light my frolic steps advance,
 And to Bacchus lead the dance ;
 An easy, pleasing task, whilst high
 Swells to the god the voice of harmony,
 Is there who comes along the way ?

Are there who in their houses stay?
 Hence, begone, whoe'er you are.
 To hallow'd sounds let each his voice prepare.
 The song to Bacchus will I raise,
 Hymning in order meet his praise.

STROPHE I.

His happy state what blessings crown,
 To whom the mysteries of the gods are known?
 By these his life he sanctifies;
 And, deep imbibed their chaste and cleansing lore,
 Hallows his soul for converse with the skies,
 Enraptur'd ranging the wild mountains o'er:
 The mighty mother's orgies leading,
 He his head with ivy shading,
 His light spear wreath'd with ivy-twine,
 To Bacchus holds the rites divue.

Haste then, ye Bacchæ, haste,
 Attend your god, the son of heaven's high king;
 From Phrygia's mountains wild and waste
 To beauteous-structured Greece your Bacchus
 bring.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Him, as the pangs of child-birth came,
 Whilst all around her flash'd the light'ning's flame,
 Untimely did his mother bear,
 Then in the thunder's vollied blaze expire.
 But fav'ring Jove, with all a father's care,
 Snatch'd his loved infant from the blasting fire,
 And, hid from Juno's jealous eye,
 Closed the young Bacchus in his thigh,
 And round the golden cincture clasp'd,
 Till the destin'd months elaps'd,
 Then gave the god to light,

His horned head with dragon-wreath entwin'd :
 Hence on their savage-nursing height
 The Mænades with these their tresses bind.

STROPHE II.

Illustrious Thebes, whose fost'ring arms
 Rear'd the young Semele's advancing charms,
 With ivy crown thy royal head,
 Bid the green smilax all around thee bloom,
 And all around its clust'ring berries spread ;
 The oak's fresh verdure, or the fir's dark gloom
 Before thee hold, and join our band ;
 Soon shall dance each raptur'd land ;
 And o'er thy spotted vestments throw
 Soft-wreathing wool as white as snow.

The wanton wands among
 Be hallow'd. To the mountain's craggy brow
 He leads his female train along,
 Who from their hands the useless distaffs throw.

ANTISTROPHE II.

O ye Curetes, friendly band,
 You, the blest natives of Crete's sacred land,
 Who tread those groves, which, dark'ning
 round,
 O'er infant Jove their shelt'ring branches spread,
 The Corybantes in their caves profound,
 The triple crest high waving on their head,
 This tymbrel framed, whilst clear and high
 Swell'd the bacchic symphony,
 The Phrygian pipe attemp'ring sweet
 Their voices to correspondence meet,
 And placed in Rhea's hands :
 The frantic Satyrs to the rites advance,

The Bacchæ join the festive bands,
And raptur'd lead the trieteric dance.

EPODE.

Raptur'd, when from the heights descending,
His nimbly-bounding train attending,
He rushes to the vales below,
Whilst loose his spotted vestments flow,
Pleased with the wild goat's offer'd blood,
Its flesh undress'd his followers' food.
To Phrygia's steeps, to Lydia's ridges high
He leads, exulting leads his train,
Whilst EVOE, EVOE, is the joyful cry,
And, as they pass, through every plain
Flows milk, flows wine, the nectar'd honey flows,
And round each soft gale Syrian odours throws.
But Bacchus, waving in his hand
The torch that from his hallow'd wand
Flames high, his roving Bacchæ leads,
And, shouting as he nimbly treads,
Flings to the wanton wind his streaming hair,
And wakes the rapture-breathing air.
Haste, ye Bacchæ, haste your flight
From the gold-prolific height
Of Tmolus haste your frolic train,
And to Bacchus raise the strain ;
To the deep-toned tymbrel's sound
EVOE, EVOE, shout around.
Loud the Phrygian cries repeat,
Whilst the flute, with accord sweet
Breathing midst your sacred play,
Bids your feet its notes obey,
As with measur'd steps ye go
To the mountain's craggy brow ;

Like the colt with wanton pride
 Bounding by its mother's side,
 Up the ridgy height advance,
 And to Bacchus lead the dance.

TIRESIAS, CADMUS, CHORUS.

TIRESIAS.

Who at the gates calls Cadmus from the house,
 Agenor's son, that Sidon's city left,
 And built the towers of Thebes? let him be told
 Tiresias seeks him: wherefore I am come
 He knows, the compact which my age hath form'd
 With his maturer age, to take with him
 The thrysus, the fawn's spotted skin to wear,
 And with the clust'ring ivy crown my head.

CADMUS.

My honour'd friend, it joy'd me in the house
 To hear thy voice, for thine is wisdom's voice.
 Accoutred with these ensigns of the god
 I come prepared: him, of my daughter born,
 Declared a god to mortals, it behoves me,
 Far as I may, to grace with highest honours.
 Where shall we form the dance? where fix our
 foot?

Where toss our hoary locks? be thou my guide,
 Thy age conducting mine, for thou art wise.
 May I with foot unweari'd through the night
 And through the day the lengthen'd measure lead,
 Shaking the thrysus: for unactive ease
 Our age forgets.

TIRESIAS.

Like thee I feel new life,
Youth springs afresh, and dares the pleasing toil.

CADMUS.

Shall then my chariot bear us to the heights ?

TIRESIAS.

That were not equal honour to the god.

CADMUS.

Old as I am then I will lead thy age.

TIRESIAS.

The god shall lead us thither without toil.

CADMUS.

Shall we alone to Bacchus lead the dance ?

TIRESIAS.

We only judge aright ; unwise the rest.

CADMUS.

The heights are distant, hang thou on my hand.

TIRESIAS.

Give me thy hand ; thus side by side we go.

CADMUS.

It is not mine, a mortal born, to slight
The gods, nor with irreverent eye to scan
Their deity : th' instructions of our fathers,
From earliest times deliver'd down, we hold ;
No argument shall shake them, though devised
With all the subtlety of deepest thought.
Some one will say, I reverence not my age,
Joining the dance my head with ivy wreath'd.
But not distinctly did the god declare
If the fresh youth should lead the dance, or those
Of riper years : from every age he claims
These common honours ; none exempt, from all
This reverence is his due. But since this light

Thine eyes behold not, I will be to thee
 A prophet, each occurrence to explain.
 Pentheus, to whom the sceptre of these realms
 I gave, Echion's son, with speed advances :
 He looks aghast : what tidings doth he bring ?

PENTHEUS, CADMUS, TIRESIAS, CHORUS.

PENTHEUS.

After a casual absence from this land
 Return'd I hear strange evils in the city :
 That all our women, from their houses fled,
 Pretending rites to Bacchus, wildly range
 The tangled woods that shade the mountain's brow,
 To welcome this new god, whoe'er he is,
 And honour him with dances : in the midst
 Stand goblets full of wine ; whilst some apart
 Fly to the lonely shades, in secret bow'rs
 Their paramours embracing ; their pretence,
 The mystic worship of the Mænades ;
 But Venus in their rites hath greater share
 Than Bacchus. Some I seiz'd ; and these in bonds
 The public prisons straitly guarded hold.
 The absent from their heights will I dislodge,
 Ino, and her who to Echion bore me,
 Agave, and the mother of Actæon
 Autonoe : these in chains of iron bound
 Soon from their wicked revelry shall cease.
 They say too that a stranger is arrived,
 A cheat, a sorcerer, from the Lydian land,
 His golden tresses waving from his head,
 In order'd ringlets, of a roseate hue,

The grace of love bright sparkling in his eyes.
He with the younger females all the day
Holds converse, all the night, mysterious rites
To Bacchus feigning. If beneath this roof
I catch him, he no more shall wave his wand
With ivy rattling, no more shake his locks,
His head lopt off. This Bacchus he reports
To be a god, whom Jove, he says, of old
Sew'd in his thigh: but in the lightning's flames
He perish'd with his mother, vengeance due
For her false tale of Jove's connubial bed.
Doth not this call aloud for punishment,
This stranger's insolence, whoe'er he be,
Affronting us with such rude outrages?
And here's another wonder; I behold
The seer Tiresias habited alike
With the fawn's dappled skin; and Cadmus too,
My mother's father, shake his bacchic wand,
Sight ludicrous; nor, sire, can I approve
To see your age of reason so devoid.
Wilt thou not shake the ivy from thy head?
Wilt thou not throw the thyrsus from thy hand?
Thy counsel this, Tiresias; this new god
To mortals introducing, would'st thou make him
Observe the flight of birds, and from the flames
Receive the hire: but that thy hoary hairs
Protect thee, thou should'st sit in chains amidst
These madding dames, for such pernicious rites
Induced. To females when the joy of wine
Flows round the festive table, I pronounce
That in such orgies there is nothing good.

CHORUS.

O piety! reverest thou not the gods,

Nor Cadmus, who the earth-born harvest sow'd ?
 Son of Echion, why defame thy race ?

TIRESIAS.

A wise man, when he takes occasions fair
 To hold discourse, finds words that promptly flow
 To grace his argument. Thou hast a tongue
 As voluble as wisdom, but thy words
 Have not her pow'r. A dangerous citizen
 Is that audacious pealing orator,
 Who lacks discretion. This new god, whom thou
 So in derision callest, shall be great,
 How great, I have not words t' express, through
 Greece.

There are two powers, young man, to mortal life
 Of chief account ; the goddess Ceres one,
 She is the earth, call her by either name ;
 With dry and solid aliment by her
 Is man sustain'd : of different nature comes
 This son of Setmele, the grape's moist juice,
 His own invention he on man bestow'd :
 This to unhappy mortals from their griefs
 Gives respite, with the flowing vine when fill'd,
 Gives sleep, and sweet oblivion of the cares
 Each day brings with it ; a more healing power
 No medicine boasts. He to the gods, himself
 Sprung from a god, is in libation pour'd,
 That mortals might through him enjoy the sweets
 Of life : yet thy rude tongue insultingly
 Derides him, in the thigh of Jove as sew'd.
 I will inform thee what this means : when Jove
 The new-born babe snatch'd from the light'ning
 flames,
 And bore him to Olympus, Juno sought

To cast him from the skies ; t' elude her aims
 Jove, as a god, this artful plan devised :
 Part of the air, which round enrings the earth,
 He burst, and lodged the child an hostage there*
 From Juno's angry efforts : but in time
 Men fabled that Jove lodged him in his thigh,
 Th' ambiguous phrase mistaking. But this god
 Hath a prophetic power ; his mystic rites
 Breathe much of inspiration ; when he flows
 Abundant on the soul, his frantic train
 He forms to tell events of times to come.
 Nor shrinks he from the toils of Mars ; in arms
 The close-rang'd squadrons he with wild dismay
 Confounds and scatters, e'er the lifted spear
 Clashes with spear : from Bacchus springs this
 terror.

And thou shalt see him bounding o'er the rocks
 Of Delphi, striking with his blazing torch
 Its double-pointed cliffs, his bacchic wand
 Shaking, and great through Greece. Believe my
 words,

And be persuaded, Pentheus : pride thee not
 In thy imperial power, thy rule o'er men,
 Nor glory in thy wisdom, that vain thought
 Is but the feverish sickness of the soul :
 But in thy realms receive the god, and pour
 The rich libations, join the bacchic train,
 And crown thy head. No female he perforce
 Hurries to wanton love ; for to his nature

* The sense of the original, such as it is, depends entirely upon the *omoiotopœia* of the words "*Ομυλος* a hostage, and "*ο μυλος* a thigh, which it is not possible to preserve in the translation : but the English reader may be assured, that he loses nothing but the sameness of sound in two words of very different signification.

In all things decent modesty is dear :
 Reflect on this : no woman in his rites,
 Come she with chaste and sober mind, shall know
 The soil of violation. Seest thou this ?
 When at the gates the thronging multitude
 Stands round thee, and with high applause the
 name

Of Pentheus through the state is sounded wide,
 It gives thee joy ; and he, I ween, is touch'd,
 When honour'd, with delight. With reverence
 then

Myself and Cadmus, whom thy taunts deride,
 Will be with ivy crown'd, and join the dance,
 A hoary pair ; yet must we join the dance,
 Nor war against the god, urged by thy words.
 For thou art mad, and thy deep malady
 No medicines, save these, have power to heal.

CHORUS.

Thy words, old man, disgrace not Phœbus : wise
 Art thou thus honouring Bacchus, the great god.

CADMUS.

Well hath Tiresias counsel'd thee, my son ;
 Abide with us, no outrage to the laws,
 For now thou flyest from us, 'midst thy boast
 Of wisdom most unwise. Were he no god,
 As thy bold words aver, let him from thee
 Receive that title, and the glorious falsehood
 Avow, as he was born of Semele ;
 So shall she seem the mother of a god,
 On us devolving honour and our race.
 Seest thou Actæon's miserable fate,
 Rent piecemeal by the ravenous dogs his hand
 Had cherish'd ? for his skill he proudly vaunted

More than Diana's in the woodland chace.
Be warn'd, come hither : I with ivy wreaths
Will crown thy brows : with us revere the god.

PENTHEUS.

Thou shalt not touch me, going as thou art
To this wild riot, nor on me wipe off
Thy folly : but this master of thy madness
Shall feel my vengeance. Go, this instant go
One of you, batter down, o'erturn the seat
Where he observes the flight of birds ; rend, crush,
And make a general havoc ; to the winds,
The tempests, toss his crowns : so shall I gall him
Most feelingly. Go you, retrace the haunts
Of this lascivious, female-figur'd stranger,
That 'mongst our women spreads a new disease,
And with pollution stains the nuptial bed.
If you can take him, bring him hither bound,
That he may die, crush'd with o'erwhelming stoncs,
And solemnize unpleasant rites at Thebes.

TIRESIAS.

Wretch as thou art, thou know'st not what thou
say'st,
Thy reason fail'd before, but this is now
Outrageous madness. Cadmus, let us go,
And deprecate from him, harsh though he be,
And from the state the vengeance of the god.
Come thou with me, but take thine ivy wand,
Try to be my support, I will be thine ;
Unseemly would it be for two old men
To fall : Thus let us go ; the son of Jove
Must be obey'd. O Cadmus, to thy house
His rage bodes rage : this with a prophet's skill
I speak not, but from circumstance ; such meed
Hath a fool's tongue, which vents his foolish thought.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I. /

Holy, by the gods rever'd,*
 Holy queen, who joy'st to wave
 O'er the earth thy golden wing,
 Goddess, hear'st thou Pentheus rave
 With unhallow'd menacing?
 Are his taunts 'gainst Bacchus heard?
 Midst pleasure's train with beauteous garlands
 crown'd,
 The son of Semele delights t' advance,
 Delights to lead the festive dance,
 Pleas'd with the soft flute's dulcet sound;
 First of the gods, he charms to rest
 The anguish of th' afflicted breast,
 When amidst the feast divine
 Sparkling flow the joys of wine,
 And o'er the ivy-shaded heads
 The balmy dews of sleep the goblet sheds.

ANTISTROPHE I.

When the rude unbridled tongue
 Vents the mad and wayward thought,
 Vengeance is its destin'd end;
 But the soul with wisdom fraught
 Calms the life, and, peace its friend,
 Hold its state securely strong.

* Who is the venerable goddess here invoked? Themida primo loco Chorus alloquitur, deinde Nemesin, quam deam a Smynæis alatam effungi solere tradit Pausanias.—Heath. This is ill expressed, as the address is simple, and to Nemesis.

For, distant as they are, on mortal man
The gods from their ethereal seats look down ;

And sober wisdom scorns to own
The wily and presumptuous plan.
Pride, that extends her aims too high,
Soon sees her short-lived glories die ;
Nor the present blessings tastes,
Whilst to great designs she hastes :
Such to me man's state appears,

When pride her structures vain on madness rears.

STROPHE II.

Might I to Cyprus win my way,

Where Venus holds her reign ;

And round her sprightly train

'The soul-subduing loves disporting play !

O that at Paphos I were laid,

Careless beneath some fragrant shade,

Where from a hundred mouths, through
meads

Which spring's eternal verdure know,

His rich train the barbaric river leads,

And visiting the plants and flow'rs,

Supplies the soft-descending show'rs !

Or up Pieria's craggy brow

Might I my footsteps bend,

In whose enchanting soft retreats

The muses love to form their seats,

Then to Olympus' hallow'd heights ascend !

Place me, Bacchus, place me there,

Smiling god of mystic pleasures,

Where the loves, the graces where

Tread in light fantastic measures ;

There, 'midst thy hallow'd train enroll'd,
Thy orgies will I hold.

ANTISTROPHE II.

The god, who sprung from Jove's embrace,
To joys the feast invites ;
Him smiling peace delights,

Wealth-giving queen, that rears youth's rising race.

To rich; to poor, to high, to low,
Free his impartial bounties flow,
The sorrow-soothing joys of wine :
Nor pleasing night, nor mirthful day

Is his, who sullen scorns the gift divine,
Whilst gloomy cares, and thoughts unblest
Roll dark'ning in his cheerless breast.
But heavenly wisdom's sober ray,

Beaming its influence wide

Benign her votaries to illume,
Shows, as it breaks the impious gloom,

The dangerous paths of violence and pride.

But the vulgar thoughtless herd,
By misguiding folly led,
Every false pursuit preferr'd,
To destruction onward tread.

Well it becomes our solemn strain
This moral lore t' explain.

PENTHEUS, BACCHUS, OFFICER, CHORUS.

OFFICER.

Thy presence, Pentheus, we approach, return'd
Not unsuccessful from the chace by thee
Injoin'd; no savage we pursued, but tame

He fled not, nor unwilling gave his hands;
 Nor from his warm cheek chang'd the roseate bloom
 Through fear, but smiling yielded to be bound,
 And hither led, obedient to my will.
 Through reverence this I said, not willingly
 I lead thee, stranger, but by the commands
 Of Pentheus, sent by him. The dames, O king,
 Seiz'd by thee and confined, with chains of iron
 Bound in the common prison, are escaped
 Far from thy sight, and to the hallow'd groves
 Win their free way : spontaneous from their feet
 The chains fell off, and of their own accord
 Back roll'd the opening gates, by mortal hands
 Untouch'd. With many marvellous powers this
 youth

Is come to Thebes. My office is discharg'd.

PENTHEUS.

Bind his hands fast : entangled in the toils,
 Light as he is of foot, he shall not 'scape me.
 Yet not ungraceful, stranger, is thy form
 Charming the women, and for this thou comest
 To Thebes ; thy length of hair, palæstric toils
 Denoting not, flows loosely round thy cheek
 Awakening soft desires ; and that fair skin
 Of cherish'd whiteness never felt the touch
 Of the sun's beams, but nurs'd in sheltering shades
 Aims with its beauty to enkindle love.
 But speak, inform me first whence is thy race.

BACCHUS.

Without proud prelude plainly will I tell thee.
 Of flow'ry Tmolus thou perchance hast heard.

PENTHEUS.

Its heights, I know, wind round the walls of Sardis.*

BACCHUS.

From thence I come, and Lydia is my country.

PENTHEUS.

Whence hast thou brought these mystic rites to Greece?

BACCHUS.

Bacchus instructed us, the son of Jove.

PENTHEUS.

Have you a Jove there who begets new gods?

BACCHUS.

No: but the Jove that here loved Semele.

PENTHEUS.

Taught he his mystic lore by night, or day?

BACCHUS.

Seeing and seen; and gave his sacred orgies.

PENTHEUS.

What ceremonious rites have these among you?

* It may not be amiss to observe here, once for all, that in the most interesting and important scenes, the dialogue is often thus broken into single lines, each speaker confining himself to his line, sometimes for a long continuance. It is difficult to conceive what grace this amœbean recitative had on the Athenian stage, but that it had some grace we may conclude from the frequent use of it by the three great writers of tragedy: to the English reader it is likely to have a different effect; yet the translator did not think himself at liberty to deviate from the manner of composition prescribed by his author. It will easily be conceived, that these passages must have occasioned a peculiar difficulty and trouble; and where an English line is found less harmonious than the composer of it wishes it to be, he humbly hopes that it will be imputed, not to his want of ear, but to the confinement he was under, and to his unwillingness to sacrifice sense to sound.

BACCHUS.

These to th' unhallow'd may not be reveal'd.

PENTHEUS.

What profit to their votaries do they bring ?

BACCHUS.

Thou may'st not hear, though worthy to be known.

PENTHEUS.

Well hast thou waved what is my wish to hear.

BACCHUS.

The orgies of the god abhor the impious.

PENTHEUS.

The god was seen by thee : what was his form ?

BACCHUS.

E'en such as pleas'd him : this I order'd not.

PENTHEUS.

This too thy art hath waved, and told me nought.

BACCHUS.

T' instruct the wise in wisdom argues weakness.

PENTHEUS.

Camest thou here first to introduce the god ?

BACCHUS.

Thcse orgies each barbaric region holds.

PENTHEUS.

Less wise than the enlighten'd sons of Grecce.

BACCHUS.

In this more wise, though differing in their laws.

PENTHEUS.

Hold you these rites by night, or in the day ?

BACCHUS.

Chiefly by night : darkness creates an awc.

PENTHEUS.

This tempts and poisons female chastity.

BACCHUS.

E'en in the day foul deeds are often found.

PENTHEUS.

Thou must be punish'd for thy sophistry.

BACCHUS.

Thou for thy folly, impious 'gainst the god.

PENTHEUS.

How bold is Bacchus, nor untrain'd in words !

BACCHUS.

What dreadful vengeance, say, wilt thou inflict ?

PENTHEUS.

First will I clip those wanton-waving locks.

BACCHUS.

These locks are sacred, cherish'd to the god.

PENTHEUS.

Deliver up that thyrsus from thine hands.

BACCHUS.

Take it thou from me : as the god's I bear it.

PENTHEUS.

Imprison'd, and in chains will I secure thee.

BACCHUS.

The god himself will free me, when I please.

PENTHEUS.

When thou invokest him 'midst his madding dames.

BACCHUS.

What now I suffer present he beholds.

PENTHEUS.

Where is he ? for mine eyes discern him not.

BACCHUS.

With me : but thy profaneness clouds thy sight.

PENTHEUS.

Lay hold on him ; for Thebes and me he scorns.

BACCHUS.

I strictly charge your folly, bind me not.

PENTHEUS.

I charge you bind him ; mine's the greater power.

BACCHUS.

Nor life, nor light thou know'st, nor who thou art.

PENTHEUS.

Yes, I am Pentheus, sprung from royal blood.

BACCHUS.

Thy name is rightly ominous of grief.

PENTHEUS.

Begone : in chains secure him near the stalls
 Where feed my horses ; there in night's dark gloom
 Let him abide ; there let him lead the dance.
 As for these women, whom he led with him,
 Th' associates of his crimes, they shall be sold ;
 Or from the rattling cymbals will I check
 Their hands, and at the loom keep them as slaves.

BACCHUS.

I will begone : for what necessity
 Inflicts not, neither doth necessity
 Compel to suffer. Bacchus, be assured,
 Whom thou hast set at nought, will on thy head
 Repay with vengeance these indignities :
 For, injuring me, thou lead'st the god in chains.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

O thou, of Achelous' race divine,
 Fairest of founts that lead

Their crystal-flowing streams through grove or
mead,

Be ev'ry blessing, virgin Dirce, thine ;

For in thy hallow'd wave

Oft joy'd the god his youthful limbs to lave.

Snatch'd from th' immortal lightning's blasting
flame

The thunderer in his thigh inclosed the boy,

Then shouted loud through joy,

" There, Dithyrambus, there securely lie,

Thy full growth to no female womb to owe ;

Thus will I show thee, thus to Thebes will show,

And Bacchus call thy name."

But thou, blest Dirce, dost his rites deny :

Why from thy crisp banks with disdain

Reject my garland-bearing train ?

Why roll away with scorn thy flying tide ?

Nay, by the purple grace that glows

Clustering beneath the rich vine's boughs,

Thy Bacchus shalt thou hail, thy boast, thy pride.

ANTISTROPHE.

What rage, what rage doth Pentheus' bosom fire ?

He from the dragon-brood,

That started from the ground, derives his blood ;

Earth-born Echion was of old his sire ;

Terrific are his frowns,

A monster, whom humanity disowns,

As fierce, as savage as the giant-race

That rear'd their impious arms against the sky.

Ah me ! I soon must lie

Seiz'd and dragg'd hence, in soine deep dungeon
bound,

Though priestess of the god : in iron chains

The leader of our choirs his pride detains,
 Hid in some dreary place
 Where night with all its horrors darkens round.
 Seest thou, O Bacchus, his rude hand ?
 Seest thou thy consecrated band
 Forc'd in th' unequal contest to engage ?
 In all thy golden-glowing bloom
 Come from Olympus, Bacchus, come,
 Thy thrysus shake, and check his savage rage !

EPODE.

Where, Bacchus, dost thou now delight
 To lead thy hallow'd band ?
 On Nysa's savage-nursing height
 Shakest thou thine ivy wand ?
 Dost thou, god, thy orgies keep
 On Corycus' craggy steep ;
 Or the darksome lairs among ;
 On high Olympus' forest-waving head,
 Where Orpheus tuned his sounding shell,
 And, as th' harmonious measures swell,
 The trees, the savage beasts he led
 Attentive to the rapture-breathing song ?
 Blest Pieria, through thy groves
 Now the god delighted roves,
 Soon to bring his dancing train,
 With his mystic revelry :
 Soon to Lydia's favour'd plain*
 As their nimble feet they ply,
 O'er Axius' stream his Mænades to guide :

* Proculdubio hic designatur Λαυδίας, vel Λαύδιος (ita enim et ab Herodoto et a Ptolemæo appellatur) qui ortum ducens ex lacu quem Axii αποσπάσμα anget, et per Pieriam manans, in mare se effundit non ita procul ab Axii ostio.—Heath. Axius is mentioned by Pausanias as a river of Pæonia.

Dispensing wealth and happiness around
 Prolific Axius rolls his lucid tide ;
 Sees his soft vales with verdant plenty crown'd,
 And, as his current wins its mazy way,
 Joys in the sprightly steeds that on its margent play.

BACCHUS, CHORUS.

BACCHUS *within.*

Evoe, my Bacchæ, ho ! hear ye my voice ?
 My Bacchæ, ho ! my Bacchæ !

CHORUS.

Who is this ?
 Who calls me ? whence this voice, this bacchic
 shout ?

BACCHUS.

Evoe ! again I call, the son of Jove
 And Semele.

CHORUS.

It is his voice, our lord ;
 Evoe, come quickly to thy hallow'd band !
 O Bacchus, Bacchus ! dreadfully the earth
 Beneath us rocks : the house of Pentheus soon
 Shall sink in the convulsion : in the house
 Is Bacchus : bow with reverence to the god.

SEMICHORUS.

We bow with reverence : see, the marble frieze
 Shakes on those pillars : Bacchus is within,
 Soon will he raise his cheerful-sounding cry.

SEMICHORUS.

Kindle th' ætherial lightning's blazing flame,
 Burn, burn the house of Pentheus.

SEMICHORUS.

Look, look there ;
 Seest thou that fire ? around the sacred tomb
 Of Semele the lightening-flames of Jove,
 In which she perish'd, unextinguish'd blaze.
 Fall prostrate on the earth, ye trembling dames,
 Fall prostrate, for our king is in the house,
 The son of Jove, and shakes it to and fro.

BACCHUS, *coming forward.*

Barbaric dames, astonished with your fears,
 Lie you thus prostrate ? you perceive, I ween,
 That Bacchus from its firm foundations shakes
 The house of Pentheus : but arise, revive
 Your drooping spirits, banish all your fears.

CHORUS.

Thou brightest glory of our bacchic rites,
 With transport I behold thee 'midst this gloom
 Which closes round my cheerless solitude.

BACCHUS.

What, sunk you in despair when I was sent
 As doom'd to lie in darkness and in chains ?

CHORUS.

What could I but despair ? for who should be
 My guardian, if on thee misfortune fell ?
 How art thou free from his unhallow'd hands ?

BACCHUS.

With ease I freed myself ; no work of toil.

CHORUS.

Did not the tyrant bind thy hands in chains ?

BACCHUS.

In that I sported with him : when he thought
 His chains to fasten on me, he nor bound
 Nor touch'd me, but was fed with empty hope.

When he had dragg'd us to the stalls, to lie
Imprison'd there, he found a bull, around
His knees he fix'd the bonds, and his cleft hoofs,
Breathless through rage, till streams of sweat flow'd
down

His limbs, and in despite he gnaw'd his lip :
Near him I sate, and quietly look'd on.
But Bacchus meanwhile coming shook the house,
And in his mother's tomb awoke the fire :
Soon as he saw it, thinking that his house
Was all in flames, his hurrying step he bent
Now this way, that way now, and call'd aloud
For water ; every slave was occupied
In the vain toil. Quitting his own attempt,
For me he thought escaped, he drew his sword,
And rush'd into the house ; but Bacchus there,
I speak what I surmise, framed in the court
A form of lucid air ; on this he flew
And smote the phantom, me as he would kill.
Nor ended here the vengeance ; for the god
Rent from its solid base the shatter'd house,
And all was crush'd in ruin whilst he view'd
My cruel chains. Now wearied with his toil
He sheath'd his sword, vain mortal, 'gainst the god
That dared to fight. I from their prison freed
The Bacchæ, and of Pentheus reckless come
To you. But to this portal will he haste :
Methinks I hear the trampling of his feet :
What will he say to this ? but I will bear
His pride with mildness, though he threaten high ;
For temperate anger well becomes the wise.

PENTHEUS, BACCHUS, CHORUS.

PENTHEUS.

And must I brook these insults ? from the chains
In which I bound him is the stranger fled.
Ha ! there he stands : what may this mean ? and
how

Darest thou appear abroad before my house ?

BACCHUS.

Stop thy foot there, stand there, and curb thy rage.

PENTHEUS.

How hast thou fled thy bonds ? how art thou here ?

BACCHUS.

Did I not tell thee one would quickly free me ?

PENTHEUS.

Who ? for thy tongue still frames some new dis-
course.

BACCHUS.

He, who to mortals rear'd the clustering vine.

PENTHEUS.

This grace to Bacchus falsely hast thou charg'd.

BACCHUS.

Bar every gate of every tower around.

PENTHEUS.

What, cannot then the gods o'erpass the walls ?

BACCHUS.

O, thou art wise, save where it most behoves thee.

PENTHEUS.

Where it behoves me most, I thre am wise.

BACCHUS.

First listen to his words, and weigh them well,

Who from the mountains comes with tidings to thee.
We, be thou sure, will stay ; we will not fly.

MESSENGER, PENTHEUS, BACCHUS,
CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

Pentheus, high sovereign of the Theban state,
Leaving Cithæron, on whose sacred head
The snow, that thaws not, whitens, I am come.

PENTHEUS.

What are thy tidings ? aught of high import ?

MESSENGER.

I saw the madding dames that from this land,
To frenzy fired, rove with unsandal'd foot ;
And I am come to tell thee, and the state,
What wond'rous deeds, and more than marvellous
They do. But I would know if I may speak
Of these with freedom, or with softer phrase
Must cloathe th' unwelcome tidings ; for I fear
Thy hasty spirit, king, thy rig'rous anger,
And all the monarch swelling in thy soul.

PENTHEUS.

Speak freely, thou from me hast nought to fear ;
Nor on the good shall my displeasure fall.
But the more dreadful are the deeds by thee
Related of these Bacchæ, with more weight
Shall my severest vengeance light on him,
Who to these arts allured our frantic dames.

MESSENGER.

Now to the mountain summits had I led
My herds, as on the earth the orient sun

Shot his refreshing beams ; when I beheld
Three bands of females, to Autonoe one
Obedient, to Agave one, thy mother,
The third to Ino : all were laid asleep ;
Beneath them some had spread the boughs of pines,
Some with the leaves of oaks form'd on the ground
Their casual bed, all decently composed.
Thou would'st not say that goblets full of wine
Inflamed their sense, or that the wanton pipe
Had led them to the lonely shades to court
The rites of Venus with their paramours.
Thy mother, when the lowings of the herds
Had reach'd her ears, arose, and 'midst her band
Shouted aloud to rouse them from their sleep :
They from their balmy slumbers oped their eyes,
And started up, but with that modesty
'Twas wonderful to see, the young, the old,
And the unmarried virgins. O'er their necks
Their loose-devolving hair they spread, refix
Their vestments, such whose cinctures were un-
loos'd,
And o'er them bind the spotted skins of fawns,
With serpents wreathing round their shaded cheeks.
Some holding in their arms a kid, and some
The wolves' wild whelps, taught them to drain their
breasts
Swelling with milk, their new-born infants left
At home ; then on their heads their garlands place
Of oak, of ivy, and the silvery bloom
Of smilax : one her thrysus took, and smote
The rock, out gush'd the pure translucent stream ;
Another cast her light wand on the ground,
Instant, so will'd the god, a fount of wine

Sprung forth ; if any wish'd a softer draught,
 These with their fingers oped the ground, and milk
 Issued in copious streams ; and from their spears
 With ivy wreath'd the dulcet honey flow'd.
 Hadst thou been present, thou would'st not, as now,
 Revile the god, but, seeing this, with vows
 Address him. All the herdsmen gather'd round,
 And all the shepherds, with dissentient voice
 To descant on these dceds, that struck their sense
 With dread and wonder. 'Midst us came a man
 Practis'd in city wiles, and train'd to gloze
 His hackney'd tongue, who thus bespoke us all :
 You, who the hallow'd mountain's pastoral tracts
 Inhabit, from her orgies shall we chace
 The royal dame Agave, to our king
 Doing a grace ? We thought he counsell'd well,
 And, cover'd in the leafy thickets, took
 Our secret stations : at th' appointed hour
 They shook the thyrsus to their revelry,
 And shouted Evoe Bacchus, son of Jove,
 With thick'ning clamours ; all the mountain danced
 To their wild revelry, with all its beasts,
 And nothing at their measures stood unmoved.
 Near me Agave chanced to bound along,
 I, from the thicket where I stood conceal'd,
 Sprung forward with an eager wish to seize her ?
 She cried aloud, Companions of my chace,
 We by these men are chased ; but follow me,
 Follow, and with the thyrsus arm your hands.
 We saved ourselves by flight, the Bacchæ else
 Had torn us piecemeal : on the herds, that grazed
 The verdant slope, their hands unarm'd with stecl,
 They rush'd ; an heifer lowing might'st thou see

Held in the hands of one, and others rent
The herds ; their limbs and cleft hoofs might'st thou
see

Hurl'd to and fro, and hanging on the pines
Distain their green with blood : e'en the fierce bulls,
Went with their angry horns to threaten, fell,
Beneath a thousand hands of youthful females
Dragg'd to the ground ; asunder were they rent
Ere thou could'st close thy royal eyelids down.

Instant, like birds that wing their airy flight,
They hurried to th' extended plains below,
Which, by Asopus water'd, yield to Thebes
A plenteous harvest ; to Erythra's walls,
And Hysia, fix'd beneath Cithæron's heights :
On these with hostile rage they fell, and rent
Whate'er they found, and toss'd it scatter'd wide ;
And e'en their children from their houses snatch'd.
Whate'er was on their shoulders placed, remain'd
Fix'd, though not bound, and fell not to the earth,
Were it or brass or iron ; in their hair
They carried fire, yet were their locks not burnt.
Those, who were plunder'd by these madding
dames,

Flew in their rage to arms ; then might'st thou see,
A sight, O king, had struck thee with amaze ;
Unstain'd with blood their iron-pointed spears
Fell harmless, whilst each thyrsus gored with
wounds :

Dismay ensued, and flight, by female hands
Men vanquish'd, not without some god. And now
Back to the heights, which they had left, they
wing'd

Their way, and to the fountains which the god

Had open'd for them, and wash'd off the blood,
Whilst from their cheeks the serpents' cleansing
tongue

Lick'd the warm drop. Therefore receive, O king,
This god, whoe'er he be, into the city ;
For powerful as he is, his bounty gave,
So fame reports, the sorrow-ceasing vine
To men : where wine is wanting, love soon flies ;
Nothing so bathes the spirits in delight.

CHORUS.

The words of freedom to a tyrant's ear
I dread to utter, yet they shall be utter'd :
This Bacchus is inferior to no god.

PENTHEUS.

These insults of the Bacchæ, like a flame,
Are kindled near us, a reproach to Greece.
This is no time for slow delay ; with speed
Fly to th' Electran gates, bid all that bear
The massy shield, that mount the rapid steed,
That toss the light targe, and the stringed bow
Grasp in their hands, attend me ; I will lead them
Against these Bacchæ. No, it is too much,
From women to endure this insolence.

BACCHUS.

What I have told thee, Pentheus, hath not power*
To move thee ; but, though thy rude rage hath
fallen
On me with rig'rous vengeance, I will say

* The messenger is gone to execute the commands of his king ; and the parts afterwards assigned to him must be given to Bacchus. There is in this scene some other confusion of persons, which could not escape the penetration of Mr. Heath, whom the translator follows.

Ill it becomes thee thus to rise in arms
 Against the god : rest thou in quiet then ;
 For Bacchus will not suffer thee to drive
 His females from their orgie-sounding heights.

PENTHEUS.

Thou shalt not check me : though from bonds es-
 caped,
 Take heed, or thou again shalt feel my vengeance.

BACCHUS.

I rather would adore him, than in rage
 Spurn at his power, a mortal 'gainst a god.

PENTHEUS.

These females from Cithæron's craggy steeps
 Will I dislodge, and spread the carnage wide.

BACCHUS.

You all will fly : this foul disgrace awaits you,
 Smote by the thyrsus of the bacchic dames,
 To cast the brazen-plated shields away.

PENTHEUS.

This stranger is intractable, and gives
 Endless disquiet, nor in suffering rests,
 Nor acting.

BACCHUS.

Yet might this be well composed.

PENTHEUS.

What should I do ? be to my slaves a slave ?

BACCHUS.

I without arms will bring these females hither.

PENTHEUS.

This is some secret treachery plann'd against me.

BACCHUS.

What treachery, if I wish my arts should save thee ?

PENTHEUS.

A common compact this, to revel still.

BACCHUS.

I own my compact, namely with the god.

PENTHEUS.

Bring me my arms : and thou forbear thy speech.

BACCHUS.

Close seated on the mountains would'st thou see them ?

PENTHEUS.

I wish it, and would give vast sums of gold.

BACCHUS.

And what excites thee to this ardent wish ?

PENTHEUS.

I long to see them when inflamed with wine.

BACCHUS.

Would'st thou with pleasure see what would offend thee ?

PENTHEUS.

Hid by the pines in silence will I look.

BACCHUS.

But they will trace thee to thy secret stand.

PENTHEUS.

Then open let it be : well hast thou said.

BACCHUS.

I am thy guide : thou shalt attempt the way.

PENTHEUS.

Guide me this instant, and command my time.

BACCHUS.

In linen vestments then array thyself.

PENTHEUS.

Why to the semblance of a woman chang'd ?

BACCHUS.

Lest, if discovered as a man, they kill thee.

PENTHEUS.

This is well judged; I now shall deem thee wise.

BACCHUS.

We this monition were by Bacchus taught.

PENTHEUS.

How then shall thy device be put in act?

BACCHUS.

Enter thy house, there will I rightly dress thee.

PENTHEUS.

How dress me? like a woman? Shame forbids.

BACCHUS.

Wish, then, no more to see the Mænades.

PENTHEUS.

What is the dress in which thou would'st attire me?

BACCHUS.

First, from thy head a length of hair shall flow.

PENTHEUS.

And with what ornaments array me next?

BACCHUS.

Long flowing robes, a mitre on thy head.

PENTHEUS.

To this attire hast thou aught else to add?

BACCHUS.

A thrysus, and a young hind's dappled skin.

PENTHEUS.

I could not bear this womanish attire.

BACCHUS.

Yet would'st thou spread the carnage wide in fight.

PENTHEUS.

Well: let me view them first, myself unseen.

BACCHUS.

'Tis wiser thus, than to hunt ills with ills.

PENTHEUS.

How through the city shall I pass unknown ?

BACCHUS.

Through unfrequented passes : I will guide thee.

PENTHEUS.

Let come what will rather than bear their scoffs.

BACCHUS.

Within consult we what behoves us do ;

E'en what thou wilt ; thy honour be my charge.

PENTHEUS.

I will attend thee ; go with thee in arms,

Or to thy counsels frame my yielding will.

BACCHUS, CHORUS.

BACCHUS.

Yes, to the Bacchæ shall he go, and there

Perish beneath their vengeance : as a mark

He stands, ye females, to our shafts exposed.

Now, Bacchus, comes thy part ; nor distant thou ;

Avenge us on him ; of his senses first

Deprive him, with light madness strike his soul :

For never in his senses would he wear

This female dress : strike him with madness then,

That he may put it on. I owe him this,

To show him in this womanish attire

A jest to Thebes, for all those threats which late

He fiercely utter'd. But I haste to fit

This dress for Pentheus, cloth'd in which he goes

To death's dark realms, slain by his mother's hands ;

And he shall know that Bacchus, son of Jove,
 His rites asserting, is indeed a god
 Most dreadful, gentle else and mild to men.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

When shall I in midnight dance,
 Light my snowy foot advance ?
 When, my swelling bosom bare,
 Fling it to the dewy air ?
 Like the sportive hind that treads
 The rich luxuriance of the verdant meads,
 When the dreadful chace she flies,
 O'er the close nets nimbly bounds,
 Hears no more the hunter's cries
 Cheer the swift-pursuing hounds :
 With the wing'd wind's rapid speed,
 From all her toils, from all her dangers freed,
 Careless she roves the wat'ry glades,
 Joys in the lonely wilds, and dark-embow'ring
 shades.

Do heaven's rich stores, does wisdom know
 A meed more glorious, than with conquering hand
 To grasp the proud head of a foe ?
 Raptures still rise where Glory takes her stand.

ANTISTROPHE.

Slow it comes, but hold its course
 Awful with unfailing force :
 On the wretch, who rites divine
 Pays at Vice's impure shrine,

Who with pride the gods defies :
 Faithful to pour the vengeance of the skies,
 They the ling'ring foot of time
 Oft conceal from mortal view ;
 But the bold unholy crime
 Still its silent steps pursue.
 Deem, then, just to Virtue's cause,
 Nought more revered, more sacred than the laws :
 And learn each power of Heaven to own,
 For Right and ancient Law have fix'd their sted-
 fast throne.

Do heaven's rich stores, does wisdom know
 A meed more glorious, than with conquering hand
 To grasp the proud head of a foe ?
 Raptures still rise where glory takes her stand.

EPODE.

Blest is the man, who, scaped the stormy seas,
 The welcome harbour gains :
 And blest is he, who, now at ease,
 Sees with success his weary labours crown'd.
 But 'midst the various blessings round
 One greater wealth, one higher power obtains :
 Yet to the myriads, which man's life supplies,
 Myriads of hopes gay-smiling rise ;
 Some fruitless fade away,
 Some to perfection each fair blossom raise.
 His happiness I praise,
 Whose life with blessings cheers each joyful day.

BACCHUS, PENTHEUS, CHORUS.

BACCHUS.

Thou, who would'st see what to thy curious eye
 Is not permitted, thou, who would'st attempt
 Things not to be attempted, Pentheus, ho !
 To thee I call, come forth, appear in sight,
 In female vestments, like the Mænades,
 Accoutred on thy mother and her train
 To be a spy, thy graceful figure show :
 A daughter sure of Cadmus meets our eye.

PENTHEUS.

Methinks I see two suns, a double Thebes,
 And its seven gates rise double to my sight.
 A bull thou seem'st to lead us, on thy head
 Thou bearest horns ; art thou indeed a beast ?
 Thou hast the semblance of a beast. The god,
 Before not friendly, goes with us along.*

BACCHUS.

He is confederate with us : now thou seest
 What thou should'st see.

PENTHEUS.

What figure do I make ?
 Have I not Ino's or Agave's air ?

BACCHUS.

So like, methinks I see them, seeing thee.

* Dr. Musgrave, following Tyrwhit, assigns this line to Bacchus ; but if it be read with a comma after *ομάρτει*,

'Ο θεὸς ομάρτει, πρόσθεν ὡν ὅν εὐμενής.
 it strongly marks the change in the mind of Pentheus now touched with frenzy.

But this loose lock is started from its place,
Nor as beneath thy mitre I compos'd it.

PENTHEUS.

Tossing my head, and rolling it within,
Acting these Bacchic motions, I displaced it.

BACCHUS.

But we, whose care it is to deck thee forth,
Will soon adjust it : upright bear thy head.

PENTHEUS.

See that thou dress me right ; I trust to thee.

BACCHUS.

Thy zone is loose, and these contracting folds
Let not thy robes flow seemly to thy feet.

PENTHEUS.

At my right foot they seem so ; but at this
They fall in decent order to my ankles.

BACCHUS.

Wilt thou not hold me dear, when thou shalt see,
Beyond thy warmest hopes, the modest Bacchæ ?

PENTHEUS.

T' appear like one of them how should I bear
The thyrsus, in my right hand, or in this ?

BACCHUS.

In thy right hand, and with thy right foot raise it.
This change of resolution I commend.

PENTHEUS.

What, may I bear Cithæron's heights, and all
The Bacchæ with them, on my shoulders rais'd ?

BACCHUS.

Ay, if thou wilt, thou may'st : thy sense before
Disorder'd, now is such as well becomes thee.

PENTHEUS.

Bear we then massy bars, or with my hands

Uprooted shall I place beneath its heights
My shoulders, or support them in my arms ?

BACCHUS.

Nay, it were pity to destroy these haunts
Where the nymphs love to sport, the fav'rite seats
Of Pan, where oft he breathes his rural reeds.

PENTHEUS.

Well hast thou said : these females will not be
By force subdued; I'll hide me 'mongst the firs.

BACCHUS.

Hide thee ! Ay, hide thee where thou oughtest to
hide ;
A fraudulent spy upon the Mænades.

PENTHEUS.

They may be caught, I ween, amidst the thickets,
Like birds, in those delightful haunts that nest.

BACCHUS.

And therefore would'st thou watch them : thou
perchance
May'st catch them too, unless thou first art caught.

PENTHEUS.

Conduct me through the midst of Thebes ; alone
Of all her sons I dare attempt this deed.

BACCHUS.

Alone thou labourest for this state, alone ;
Therefore a meed awaits thee, as is fit.
I will conduct thee safe ; to bring thee back
Shall be another's office.

PENTHEUS.

What, my mother's ?

BACCHUS.

To all conspicuous.

PENTHEUS.

And for that I go.

BACCHUS.

Thou shalt come carried back.

PENTHEUS.

Thy words import

My delicacy.

BACCHUS.

In thy mother's arms.

PENTHEUS.

Will she constrain me to this daintiness ?

BACCHUS.

Such dainties.

PENTHEUS.

Such as I deserve I court.

BACCHUS.

Ruthless thou art, and ruthless art thou gone
To ruthless sufferings : therefore shalt thou find
A glory firmly 'stablish'd in the skies.

Stretch forth thy hands, Agave, with thy sisters,
Daughters of Cadmus ; see, I bring this youth
To this great contest : I shall be victorious,
And Bacchus : but th' event will show the rest.

CHORUS.

STROPHE

Go, ye fleet dogs of madness go,
Sweep o'er the mountain's rugged brow,
Where sport the dames of Cadmus' royal race :
Inflame their frantic fury high
To hold this female-vested wretch in chace,
Who madly dares their hallow'd haunts espy.

Him from Cithæron's rocky head,
 Or some enclosure's rising mound,
 His mother first shall view in ambush laid,
 Then shouting call the Mænades around,
 These heights, these heights, ye Bacchæ,
 who
 Ascends, our mountain-ranging train to view ?
 Whenee is his lineage trae'd ?
 His birth he to no woman owes ;
 But from some tygress in the howling waste,
 Or Lybian Gorgon rose.
 Vengeance, in all thy terrors clad, appear,
 High thy thund'ring falchion rear,
 Stain it in his unrighteous, impious gore,
 And ruin on this earth-born tyrant pour.

ANTISTROPHE.

He with unjust nefarious thought,
 And with unholy madness fraught,
 Against thy orgies, Bæelius, dares to fight,
 Against his mother's hallow'd train,
 By force to conquer thy uneconquer'd might,
 Swoln with obdurate pride and malice vain.
 With peace their cloudless days shall shine,
 Who wisdom's temp'rate power obey :
 But death on him, that spurns at rites divine,
 Comes undisguis'd, and rushes on his prey.
 With joy I see their greatness rise,
 And envy not when Glory crowns the wise ;
 In honour train'd their lives
 By day, by night the gods adore :
 But lawless is his rage, who madly strives
 T' insult their slighted power.
 Vengeance, in all thy terrors clad, appear,

High thy thund'ring falchion rear ;
 Stain it in his unrighteous, impious gore,
 And ruin on this earth-born tyrant pour.

EPODE.

His sense, O son of Jove, confound ;
 A bull to his astonish'd eyes appear ;
 Or as a dragon rear
 A hundred threat'ning heads : or to his sight
 A lion breathing flames around
 His guilty soul affright.
 Go, hunter god, pursue the chace,
 Whilst the smile brightens on thy face :
 Go, hunter god, thy Bacchæ lead ;
 Their unabating, fatal speed
 Shall seize the savage as he flies,
 And triumph o'er their trembling prize.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

O house, illustrious once through Greece, thou
 house
 Of th' old Sidonian chief, who sow'd in th' earth
 The dragon harvest of the serpent's seed,
 How I lament thee, though a slave ; yet slaves,
 If faithful, mourn the ruin of their lords.

CHORUS.

What tidings bearest thou ? from the Bacchæ aught ?

MESSENGER.

Pentheus is dead, earth-born Echion's son.

CHORUS.

O sovereign Bacchus, thou art found a god !

MESSENGER.

What say'st thou, woman ; what import thy words ?
Dost thou then glory in my lord's ill fate ?

CHORUS.

A stranger, in barbaric strains I hymn
The god, nor longer dread the threaten'd chains.

MESSENGER.

Is there no manly spirit left in Thebes ?

CHORUS.

O'er me not Thebes, but Bacchus hath command.

MESSENGER.

So far thou may'st be pardon'd ; but to joy
In evils suffer'd, that becomes you not.

CHORUS.

But tell me how he perish'd, by what death,
The ruthless man devising ruthless deeds.

MESSENGER.

Soon as we left Therapnæ, to our Thebes
Adjacent, and had pass'd Asopus' stream,
We mount Cithæron's steep, Pentheus, myself,
(I on my lord attended) and our guide,
The stranger ; to the forest first we came,
And trod with silent step the grassy ground,
Nor breath'd a whisper, for we went to see,
Not to be seen. A hollow glen was here,
On each side crags arose, and through the midst,
With pine trees shaded round, a streamlet flow'd.
There sate the Mænades, their hands employ'd
In grateful tasks ; around the thyrsus some
Deserted of its foliage wreath'd afresh
The ivy twine ; some, from the various heights
Like hinds descending, with melodious voice
Respondent each to each the sprightly song

To Bacchus rais'd. Th' unhappy Pentheus here,
The female band not seeing, thus bespoke
The stranger, Where I stand my searching eye
Descries not their employ ; let me ascend
Some pine that waves his tall top o'er yon mound,
Thence might I view distinct their shameful deeds.
There with amaze a wond'rous act I saw,
A pine's aerial branch the stranger took,
And downward drew it, drew it to the ground,
Till, as one bends a bow, or curves the line
That marks the rolling wheel's circumference,
The stranger with his hands the mountain pine
Drew down, and bent it to the earth, a deed
Exceeding mortal strength : amidst the boughs
He seated Pentheus, to its upright state
Then let the branch with gentle motion rise,
Lest the too quick and violent recoil
Should toss him from his hold : and now the tree
Stood firm its upright height, and bore my lord,
Seen by the Bacchæ, more than seeing them,
As more conspicuous in his lofty seat.
And now the stranger was no more beheld ;
But from th' ethereal height a voice was heard,
Of Bacchus, it should seem, calling aloud,
Ye blooming females, him I bring, who held
Your train, and me, and my mysterious rites
In proud derision : pour your vengeance on him.
He spoke, and to the sky, and to the earth
Display'd a steady blaze of sacred light.
The air was hush'd, through all the pastur'd grove
And all its leaves a solemn silence reigned,
Nor sound of beast was heard : the Theban dames,
The voice not heard distinct, start from their seats,
And roll their eyes around : again he gave

The dread command : but when they clearly knew
The bidding of the god, with rapid speed,
Swift as the flight of doves, they forward rush'd,
Agave, and the dames of royal blood,
And all the Bacchæ : with the god inspired
They bounded o'er the torrent of the grove,
And up the crags ; but when my lord they saw
High-seated on the pine, they mount a cliff
Full opposite, and at his head first hurl
What of the rock their hand could grasp : and some
The broken branches of a pine tree dart :
Others aloft at his uneasy seat
The thyrsus cast, but reach'd him not, the height
Beyond their aim, where my unhappy lord
Astonied sate, nor had what to devise.
And now the boughs of oaks, and their tough roots
Rent from the ground, nor wanted they for this
Poles arm'd with iron, in a vollied storm
They hurl'd : but when Agave saw their toils
Wasted in vain, she cried, Haste, form a ring,
And grasp the stem around, that we may seize
This mounted savage ; let him not divulge
The secret orgies of the god : at once
A thousand hands were to the pine applied,
And instant from the ground uprooted it ;
Pentheus, high-seated, with it from his height
Came headlong to the earth, with many a groan,
For mischief now he saw was nigh at hand.
Agave, as the priestess of the rites,
Began the murd'rous work, and rushes on him ;
The mitre from his hair he rent, that known
His mother might not kill him ; on her cheek
He placed his soothing hand, and suppliant said,

'Tis Pentheus, O my mother, 'tis thy son,
Thine and Echion's son, who sues to thee ;
Have pity on me, mother, do not kill
Thy son for his offence. She foam'd with rage,
Rolling her eyes askance, nor harbour'd thoughts
She ought to harbour, frantic with the god,
Nor listen'd to his prayers ; but his left hand
She seiz'd, and pressing on his side tore off
His shoulder, with a force not hers, the deed
Made easy by the god. On th' other side
Ino assisted in the dreadful work,
Rending his flesh : Autonoe hung upon him,
And all the Bacchæ ; every voice was rais'd
At once ; his dying breath was spent in groans ;
They shouted wild : one snatch'd an arm, and one
A sandal'd foot, dismember'd by their force
Lay the bare trunk ; in their ensanguin'd hands
Each hurl'd the flesh of Pentheus to and fro ;
His limbs were scatter'd; on the craggy rocks
Some, on the close-entwined thickets some,
No easy search ; the miserable head
His mother, as she caught it in her hands,
Fix'd on her thrysus o'er Cithæron bears
High-lifted, as some mountain lion's spoils :
Leaving her sisters with the Mænades,
And proud of her ill-fated prize, her steps
She this way bends, on Bacchus calling loud,
The partner of the chace and of the prize,
The glorious conqueror, who this conquest gain'd
Of tears to her. This horrid scene I fled,
Ere to this house Agave should return.
A modest awe and reverence of the gods

I deem the most distinguish'd ornament,
And wisdom's noblest height in mortal man.

CHORUS.

To Bacchus raise the choral strain,
And celebrate the god for Pentheus slain.

This tyrant of the dragon race,

Our hallow'd haunts to trace,

Conceal'd a female stole beneath,

The thyrsus shook with impious pride,

The faithful wand of death,

And on his ruin rush'd, a bull his guide.

Ye Theban dames, to Bacchus dear,

Your god hath led the vaunting foe,

His hopes of conquest vanish'd into air,

To groans, to tears, to wo.

A glorious conquest, when her hand

With her son's gushing blood distain'd

The mother rais'd.—

No more : I see her ; to this royal house
Agave speeds, rolling her furious eyes
Askance. Receive th' associate of the god.

AGAVE, CHORUS.

AGAVE.

Ye Asiatic Bacchæ—

CHORUS.

Why that call ?

AGAVE.

We from the mountains bring a new-slain prize,
A glorious capture, to this royal house.

CHORUS.

I see it, and receive thee to our band.

AGAVE.

I caught him without toils, without a troop
Of hunters, this young lion : thou may'st see him.

CHORUS.

In what lone wild ?

AGAVE.

Cithæron.

CHORUS.

Of Cithæron

What ?

AGAVE.

Kill'd him.

CHORUS.

But whose hand first wounded him ?

AGAVE.

'Tis mine, it is my prize.

CHORUS.

Happy Agave !

AGAVE.

My name amidst the bacchic train is famed :
What other dame from Cadmus——

CHORUS.

What of Cadmus ?

AGAVE.

Who, sprung from Cadmus, save myself, myself,
Once touch'd this savage ?

CHORUS.

Happy in thy prize !

AGAVE.

Share then the feast.

CHORUS.

Alas, what should I share ?

AGAVE.

'Tis but a whelp : beneath his shaggy head
The hair yet soft begins to clothe his cheeks :
This brinded mane is the rough grace, that marks
The mountain savage. Bacchus to this chace,
The hunter Bacchus, rouz'd the Mænades,
Showing his skill.

CHORUS.

The chace delights our king.

AGAVE.

Thou dost command him.

CHORUS.

What do I commend ?

AGAVE.

The Thebans soon, and Pentheus too, my son,
Shall praise his mother, who this glorious prize
Took gloriously, this lion-gender'd prize.

CHORUS.

Dost thou exult ?

AGAVE.

I joy, I joy in deeds
So great, so glorious, by my hand perform'd.

CHORUS.

Show then, unhappy, to thy citizens
Show the proud conquest thou hast brought with
thee.

AGAVE.

You, who the beauteous-structur'd towers of Thebes
Inhabit, come, daughters of Cadmus, come,
And see this prize, this savage, which I caught
Not grasping the Thessalian spear, nor round
Spreading the toils ; but with these vig'rous arms

Of snowy whiteness ; this I make my boast,
 And the fine artist forms the spear in vain ;
 For with these hands I caught him, with these hands
 I rent the bleeding savage limb from limb.
 Where is my aged father ? let him come :
 Where is my son, my Pentheus ? He will fix
 High on the sculptur'd pillar, that supports
 The fretted roof, this head, the lion's spoils
 Which in the chace I caught, and bring with me.

CADMUS, AGAVE, CHORUS.

CADMUS

Follow me you, that bear the wretched load
 Of Pentheus ; my attendants, follow me ;
 For to the house I bear his body, found
 With toilsome search along Cithæron's heights
 Rent piecemeal, and the members scatter'd wide,
 With pain collected in the mazy wood.
 For as the gates I enter'd with the seer,
 Hoary Tiresias, of the daring deeds
 Wrought by my daughters in their bacchic rage
 I heard ; and back returning to the heights
 I bring my son, slain by the Mænades.
 The mother of Actæon there I saw,
 Autonoe, with Ino at her side,
 Roving with frantic speed the tangled wilds :
 One there inform'd me that Agave bent
 This way her bacchic foot ; he told me truth ;
 I see her here, her look betokening mischief.

AGAVE.

My father, I may justly boast to thee
 That thou hast daughters who in worth excel

All of their sex ; this praise belongs to all,
 But most to me, who left th' embroider'd web ,
 For deeds of higher enterprise, to chase
 The mountain savage ; and this glorious prize,
 See, in mine arms I bring, which hung on high
 May grace thy house : my father, in thy hands
 Receive them ; glorying in my well-earn'd spoils
 Invite thy friends, and spread the joyful feast :
 For thou art blest, in our achievements blest.

CADMUS.

Unmeasurable grief ! this is a sight
 Not to be borne, this murder by your hands
 Committed. To the gods dost thou present
 A goodly victim, to the festive board
 Inviting Thebes and me. Thy miseries first
 I wail, and then mine own. The royal Bacchus
 With justice hath undone us, but severe
 In vengeance, as from hence he draws his birth.

AGAVE.

How wayward is old age, of aspect sour,
 To all around morose ! May my son be
 Successful in the chace, and imitate
 His mother's manners, 'midst the Theban youth
 When ardent he pursues the savage beast !
 But he alone dares fight against the god :
 He must be warn'd of this by thee, my father,
 And me, nor pride him in pernicious wisdom.
 Where is he ? To my presence who will call him,
 That he may see me happy in my prize ?

CADMUS.

Ah me ! when you shall know what you have done,
 How wretched will you be ? Should you remain
 Always as now, though far from happiness,

Yet will you be insensible of ill.

AGAVE.

What is not glorious, what is mournful here ?

CADMUS.

To yon ethereal height first raise thine eyes.

AGAVE.

I do ; and there what am I to behold ?

CADMUS.

Seems it the same, or to receive a change ?

AGAVE.

Brighter it seems, and clearer than before.

CADMUS.

Hangs the same wild amazement on thy soul ?

AGAVE.

I know not ; but I feel my sense return'd,
And each conception of my mind is chang'd.

CADMUS.

Wilt thou then hear, and coolly answer me ?

AGAVE.

All memory of my former words is lost.

CADMUS.

What house receiv'd thee with connubial rites ?

AGAVE.

Thou gavest me to the dragon-sprung Echion.

CADMUS.

What son then to thy husband didst thou bear ?

AGAVE.

Pentheus, the offspring of our mutual love.

CADMUS.

Whose is that head thou graspest in thine arms ?

AGAVE.

A lion's, as the female hunters said.

CADMUS.

Look at it, small the labour, view it well.

AGAVE.

What do I see? what bear I in my hands?

CADMUS.

Look with attention at it; know it clearly.

AGAVE.

I see the greatest grief: unhappy me!

CADMUS.

Appears it to thee like a lion's head?

AGAVE.

No: but I hold, ah me! the head of Pentheus.

CADMUS.

Lamented, ere thy sense distinguish'd it.

AGAVE.

Who slew him? and how came it in my hands?

CADMUS.

Unhappy truth, ah! how unwelcome art thou!

AGAVE.

Tell me: my anguish'd heart already throbs.

CADMUS.

By thee, and by thy sisters was he slain.

AGAVE.

Where died he? in the house? or in what place?

CADMUS.

Where 'midst his clamorous hounds Actæon fell.

AGAVE.

Why to Cithæron went my wretched son?

CADMUS.

'T insult thy orgies, and the god, he went.

AGAVE.

What to those craggy heights could urge our steps?

CADMUS.

Madness : and all the frantic city raved.

AGAVE.

Too late I see it, Bacchus hath undone us.

CADMUS.

Reviled and wrong'd, you deem'd him not a god.

AGAVE.

Where is the much-loved body of my son ?

CADMUS.

With pain I found it in the wilds, and bring it.

AGAVE.

Are the parts well united ? On my son
How great a portion of my madness fell !

CADMUS.

He was like you, and reverenc'd not the god,
Who therefore bound us all in the same chain
Of ruin, him, and you, to desolate
The house, and me, who destitute of sons
Behold this manly branch, which sprung from thee,
Murder'd most vilely, and most shamefully,
To whom all look'd with reverence. Thou, my
child,

My daughter's son, didst in my house bear rule,
And awe the city : none to my hoar hairs
Dared offer violence, beholding thee ;
Thy vengeance had chastis'd him : from my house
Disgrac'd, an out-cast shall I now be driven,
The mighty Cadmus, who the Theban race
Sow'd in the ground, and reap'd the glorious har-
vest.

Darest of men ! for thou, though now no more,
Shalt yet be number'd 'mongst my best loved sons.
No more thy hand shall stroke this beard, no more

Embrace thy mother's father, nor thy voice
 Address me thus, Who wrongs thy reverend age ?
 Who dares dishonour thee ? who wrings thy heart
 With rude offence ? Inform me, and this hand
 Shall punish him that injures thee, my father.
 But now I am afflicted, wretched thou,
 Thy mother sinks beneath her misery,
 And her unhappy sisters. If there be
 A man, whose impious pride contemns the gods,
 Let him behold his death, and own their power.

CHORUS.

Cadmus, we grieve for thee : thy daughter's son
 Hath his reward, just, though it pains thy heart.

BACCHUS.

O father, for my state now chang'd thou seest,*
 Thou and thy loved Harmonia, who from Mars
 Descended graced thy bed, though mortal thou,
 Shall wear a dragon's savage form. With her,
 For so the oracle of Jove declares,
 Toils after toils revolving shalt thou hear,†
 Leading barbarians ; and with forces vast
 Level great towns and many to the ground :
 But when the shrine of Phœbus their rude hands
 Shall plunder, intercepting their return
 Misfortune shall await them : thee shall Mars
 Deliver and Harmonia from the ruin,

* Tyrwhit thinks that the original is here mutilated ; to him Dr. Musgrave assents. Mr. Heath proposes a small but very ingenious emendation : Barnes defends the present text. The translator follows Mr. Heath. Bacchus now appears in his proper dignity as a god.

† The translator readily acknowledges his uncertainty of the true reading, and true sense of this passage.

And place you in the regions of the blest.
 This, from no mortal father, but from Jove
 Descended, Bacchus tells thee : had you known
 What prudence is, but you would none of her,
 You might have flourish'd in a prosperous state,
 Blest with th' alliance of the son of Jove.

CADMUS.

We have offended ; we entreat forgiveness.

BACCHUS.

Too late you learn : you would not when you ought,

CADMUS.

We own it ; yet thy vengeance is severe.

BACCHUS.

Though born a god, I was insulted by you.

CADMUS.

Ill suits the gods frail man's relentless wrath.

BACCHUS.

Long since my father Jove thus graced his son.

AGAVE.

Ah me ! it is decreed, unhappy exile.

CADMUS.

Alas, my daughter, in what dreadful ills
 Are we all plung'd, thy sisters, and thyself
 Unhappy ! I shall bear my wretched age
 To sojourn with barbarians, fated yet
 To lead a mixt-barbaric host to Greece.
 Harmonia too, my wife, the child of Mars,
 Chang'd to a dragon's savage form, myself
 A dragon, to the altars, to the tombs
 Of Greece, a chief with many a ported spear
 Shall I lead back ; and never shall my toils
 Know respite ; never shall I pass the stream
 Of Acheron below, and there find rest.

AGAVE.

Hence, rest of thee, my father, will I fly.

CADMUS.

Why, my unhappy daughter, on my hand
Thus dost thou hang, as if the silver swan*
Should fly for refuge to the useless drone?

AGAVE.

A wretched out-cast, which way shall I fly?

CADMUS.

I know not, child: small aid thy father givcs.

AGAVE.

Farewell, my royal mansion, and farewell
Thou city of my fathers: I will leave thee,
Through grief an exile from my nuptial bed.

CADMUS.

Go, now, my child, to Aristæus go.†

AGAVE.

I am bereav'd of thee, my father.

CADMUS.

Thine,
My daughter, and thy sister's woes I wail.

AGAVE.

Severely, most severely hath the god
Brought on thy house this dreadful punishment.

* This also is a suspected passage: the proposed emendation of Mr. Heath is too violent, and little assists the sense. Dr. Musgrave observes, that the Swan is celebrated by Sophocles for its filial affection; and that Euripides has elsewhere used the word *κερῆνα*, a drone, to denote an enfeebled helpless old man.

† That is, to Thessaly, where Aristæus fed the sheep of the Muses. Apollon. Rhod. L. 2. Dr. Musgrave.—He was the husband of Autonoe.

CADMUS.

Dreadful through you my sufferings ; every tongue
Shall sound my name with infamy in Thebes.*

AGAVE.

Farewell, my father.

CADMUS.

My unhappy child,
Thou too farewell, if aught can now be well.

AGAVE.

Lead, my attendants, lead me to my sisters,
That I may take them with me, of my flight
Mournful associates. Thither will I go,
Where no Cithæron is polluted, where
These eyes may never see Cithæron more,
And where no thyrsus wakes uneasy thought.
To other bacchic dames I leave these rites.

CHORUS.

With various hand the gods dispense our fates ;
Now show'ring various blessings, which our hopes
Dared not aspire to ; now controlling ills
We deem'd inevitable : thus the god
To these hath given an end exceeding thought :
Such is the fortune of this awful day.

* These two lines are generally assigned to Bacchus : but after he had shown himself as a god, and declared that his father Jupiter had long so graced his son, his continuance in the scene would be unnecessary, and even improper : they are, therefore here given to Cadmus. The learned reader will judge.

IPHIGENIA IN AULIS.

VOL. I.

III

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

AGAMEMNON.

MENELAUS.

ACHILLES.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

IPHIGENIA.

ATTENDANT.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS, FEMALES OF CHALCIS.

IPHIGENIA IN AULIS.

THE combined fleet of Grecce was assembled at Aulis, and had been long detained there by contrary winds: the Oracle declared that they would not be permitted to sail, unless Iphigenia were sacrificeed to Diana; but that, if the goddess were thus propitiated, they should reaeh the Phrygian shore, and lay the towers of Troy level with the ground. Upon this Agamemnon had been prevailed upon to send for his daughter, under pretence of giving her in marriage to Achilles: the arguments of Ulysses, his affection for his brother, his desire of glory, his love of his country, and his reverence for the gods, had impelled him to this measure: but he had consented with reluctance, and felt all the fondness of a father: this conflict of his mind is finely described throughout the drama: at length paternal tenderness prevails over all other considerations, he seerely forms measures to prevent her coming, is deteeted, and disappointed. Iphigenia arrives attended by her mother; but instead of her nuptials with the most aceomplished of all the Gre-cian Princes, she soon learns that she is destined to

bleed as a victim on the altar of Diana. Never did Euripides succeed better in painting scenes of distress; never was he more powerful in exciting the softest emotions of pity. The characters of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra are admirably sustained.

The scene is at Aulis, before the house of Agamemnon.

IPHIGENIA IN AULIS.

AGAMEMNON, ATTENDANT.

AGAMEMNON.

THOU old and faithful servant, from the house
Come forth.

ATTENDANT.

I come. What recent care disturbs
The royal Agamemnon ?

AGAMEMNON.

Thou shalt know.

ATTENDANT.

I haste : for not to sleep inclines my age,
Nor in these eyes is dull.

AGAMEMNON.

What star is that
There sailing ?

ATTENDANT.

Sirius, in his middle height
Near the seven Pleiads riding.

AGAMEMNON.

Not the sound

Of birds is heard, nor of the sea ; the winds
Are hush'd in silence on the Euripus.

ATTENDANT.

Why doth the royal Agamemnon then
Rush from his tent ? Through Aulis quiet reigns,
And motionless the watch their station hold.
Let us go in.

AGAMEMNON.

I envy thee, old man ;
I envy all, who pass their lives secure
From danger, to the world, to fame unknown :
But those to greatness rais'd I envy not.

ATTENDANT.

The dignity of life in greatness lies.

AGAMEMNON.

Yet is that dignity unsafe : the chace
Of glory is delightful, but when won
It brings disquiet : one while from the gods,
Their worship ill directed, ruin comes ;
One while the various and discordant views
Of men distract the mind, and wound its peace.

ATTENDANT.

This I approve not in a potent chief.
Not to all good, without a taste of ill,
Did Atreus give thee birth : it must be thine
To joy, it likewise must be thine to grieve,
For thou art mortal born ; and though perchance
To thee not pleasing, thus the gods decree.
The blazing lamp didst thou display, and write
That letter, which thou holdest in thy hand
E'en now ; the writing didst thou blot ; then seal ;
And open it again ; then on the floor
Cast it in grief, the warm tear from thine eye

Fast flowing, in thy thoughts distracted near,
 As it should seem, to madness. What new care,
 My royal lord, say what new care disturbs thee ;
 Tell me, impart it to me ; to a man
 Honest and faithful wilt thou speak, a man
 By Tyndarus of old sent to thy wife,
 A nuptial present, to attend the bride,
 One of tried faith, and to his office just.

AGAMEMNON.

To Leda were three beauteous daughters born,
 Phoebe, and Clytemnestra now my wife,
 And Helena : to her the youths of Greece,
 Those of the noblest rank, as wooers came.
 Each menac'd high, on deeds of blood resolv'd,
 Should he not win the virgin : this was cause
 To Tyndarus her father of much doubt,
 To give, or not to give her, and how best
 To make good fortune his : at length this thought
 Occurr'd, that each to each the wooers give
 Their oath, and plight their hands, and on the flames
 Pour the libations, and with solemn vows
 Bind their firm faith that him, who should obtain
 The virgin for his bride, they all would aid ;
 If any dar'd to seize and bear her off,
 And drive by force her husband from her bed,
 All would unite in arms, and lay his town
 Greek or Barbaric, level with the ground.
 Their faith thus pledg'd, the aged Tyndarus
 Beneath them well with cautious prudence wrought ;
 He gave his daughter of her wooers one
 To chuse, tow'rds whom the gentle gales of love
 Should waft her : and she chose (O had he ne'er
 Obtain'd that envied favour !) Menelaus.

To Lacedemon now the Phrygian came,
The judge between the beauties of the sky,
So fame reports him : gorgeous was his dress,
Glitt'ring with gold and vermeil-tinctur'd dies,
Barbaric elegance : he lov'd, was lov'd,
And bore the beauteous Helena away
To Ida's pastoral groves ; for Menelaus
Was absent then : deserted thus through Grcece
He rav'd, the oaths attesting giv'n of old
To Tyndarus, conjuring all t' avenge
His wrongs. On this the Grecians rush to war,
And taking arms come hither to the straits
Of Aulis, furnish'd well with ships, with spears,
And num'rous chariots : me they chose their chief,
Doing a grace to Menelaus, for that
I am his brother. O that this high honour
Some other had receiv'd, not I ! the troops
Collected and embodied, herc we sit
Inactive, and from Aulis wish to sail
In vain. The prophet Calchas, 'midst the gloom
That darken'd on our minds, at length pronounc'd
That Iphigenia, my virgin daughter,
I to Diana, goddess of this land,
Must sacrifice : this victim giv'n the winds
Shall swell our sails, and Troy beneath our arms
Be humbled in the dust ; but if denied,
These things are not to be. This when I heard,
I said that by the herald's voice the troops
Should be discharg'd, for never would I bear
To slay my daughter ; till my brother came,
And, urging many a plea, persuaded me
To bear these dreadful things. I wrote, I seal'd
A letter to my wife, that she should send

Her daughter, to Achilles as a bride
 Affianc'd: of his worth I spoke in terms
 Of amplest honour; said he would not sail
 With Greece, unless from us his nuptial bed
 Was deck'd in Phthia: with my wife this found
 Easy belief, the false tale that announç'd
 Her daughter's destin'd marriage. Of the Greeks
 None but Ulysses, Calchas, and my brother
 To this are conscious. What I then resolv'd
 Imprudently, I prudently retract
 Committed to this letter, which thou saw'st me
 This night, old man, unfold and fold again.
 Take then this letter, haste, to Argos go.
 What there is written, in its secret folds
 Enclos'd, I will explain to thee; for thou
 Art faithful to my wife, and to my house.

ATTENDANT.

Read it, explain its purport, that my words
 May aptly with thy writing correspond.

AGAMEMNON reads.

"Whate'er my former letter gave in charge,
 Daughter of Leda, this I write to thee,
 That to Eubœa's winding bay thou send not
 Thy daughter, nor to Aulis rising high
 Above the waves; for to some other time
 The nuptials of the virgin we defer."

ATTENDANT.

Will not Achilles, frustrate of his bride,
 Be fir'd with rage 'gainst thee, and 'gainst thy wife?
 This might be dang'rous: is not such thy thought?

AGAMEMNON.

His name indeed we used, but nothing more:

Achilles knows not of the nuptials, knows
Of our transactions nought, nor that I nam'd
My daughter his, as to his bed betroth'd.

ATTENDANT.

This, royal Agamemnon, is a deed
Of perilous daring. So thy daughter, nam'd
A bride to him who from a goddess draws
His birth, thou ledst a victim for the Grecians.

AGAMEMNON.

Distraction's in the thought: unhappy me,
My misery sinks me! but away; to age
Remitting nothing, use thy utmost speed.

ATTENDANT.

I hasten, king.

AGAMEMNON.

Now sit not on the bank
Of shaded fountain, nor indulge to sleep.

ATTENDANT.

Think better of me.

AGAMEMNON.

Take good heed, where'er
The ways divide, observing that the car,
Whose wheels swift-rolling bear my daughter hither
Where rides the fleet of Greece, escape thee not.

ATTENDANT.

I shall observe.

AGAMEMNON.

Now haste thee from the tent.
If on thy way thou meet her, backward turn
Her reins, and send her to Mycenæ's walls
Rais'd by the Cyclops.

ATTENDANT.

How, if I shall say

This to thy wife and daughter, shall I gain
Belief?

AGAMEMNON.

This seal, whose impress on that letter
Thou bear'st, take with thee. Go ; that silver light
Shows the approach of morn ; the harbinger
Of the sun's fiery steeds. Be in my toils
Assistant to me : for of mortals none
Knows a pure course of unmix'd happiness ;
None yet was born without a share of grief.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Thus have I reach'd the sandy shore*
Where Aulis rises from the dashing wave,
Nor fear'd its foam to brave,
The narrow Euripus advent'ring o'er ;
My native Chalcis left, that feeds the pride
Of the swift current hast'ning to the main,
Illustrous Arethusa's silver tide.†
The Grecian camp, the Grecian fleet, the train

* The Euripus, which divides Bœotia from Eubœa, is very narrow in the part between Aulis and Chalcis : from this town the females, who form the Chorus, come to see the camp and navy of the Grecians, of which in this ode they give an account. A regular and circumstantial enumeration of the ships and forces would have had a very ill effect in the drama ; but the poet has with great art placed this prodigious armament in a manner before our eyes, and by giving us a view of the confederate powers of Greece, impressed our minds with a sense of the importance of the sacrifice of Iphigenia.

† There are four rivers of this name, one at Syracuse, one at Smyrna, one at Ithaca, and this at Chalcis.

Of Demigods I wish to see,
 Who with a thousand ships, that wait to bear
 'Gainst Troy the vengeful war,
 (For thus our husbands say the states decree)
 By the imperial Agamemnon led,
 In arms for bright-hair'd Menelaus arise,
 And Helen ravish'd from his nuptial bed :
 Her from Eurotas' sedgy bank his prize*
 The shepherd Paris bore away,
 The gift of Venus on that day
 When, nigh the dewy fountain as she stood
 Contending with the rival forms of heaven,
 To her the palm of beauty given,
 In all her radiant charms the goddess glow'd.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Diana's hallow'd grove I seek,
 Where to the goddess frequent victims bleed,
 And through it pass with speed,
 The warm blush kindling on my youthful cheek,
 Ardent my wish to view the guard of shields,
 The armed tents of Greece extended wide,
 Their horse in warlike muster o'er the fields,
 And all the glorious scene of martial pride.
 There either Ajax struck my sight,
 One from Oileus draws his birth, and one
 From greater Telamon,
 Salamis glories in her hero's might.
 These sitting with Protesilaus I saw
 Delighted with the various-figur'd die.
 But Palamedes, proud his birth to draw
 From Neptune, with Tydides whirl'd on high

* Eurotas is the celebrated river of Sparta.

The massy discus : Merion there
 Rejoic'd the manly sport to share,
 Wond'rous the hero's form and martial grace ;
 Ulysses there, whose island's craggy brow
 Frowns o'er the darken'd waves below ;
 And Nireus, fairest of the Grecian race.

EPODE I.

Swift as the winged wind*
 Achilles, whom the goddess Thetis bore,
 And gave to Chiron in his rigid lore
 To train his infant mind,
 I saw : in all his arms array'd,
 The cumbrous equipage of war,
 His speed he o'er the strand display'd,
 Contending with the harness'd car :
 High o'er the beam I saw Eumelus rise,

* The poet hath here given us a picture of ancient manners in the sports of the Grecian princes during their stay at Aulis. Protesilaus and a party with him are entertaining themselves at the game of Chess, while the more active Diomedé and others are engaged in the manly exercise of the Discus. The swift Achilles, who commands our attention for his birth and education, is finely characterised as in his arms and on foot contending in the course with the horses of Eumelus ; even his diversions are heroic, and such as no hero but Achilles could engage in. With Eumelus the English reader is already acquainted as the son of Admetus and Aleestis : his coursers are thus described by Homer, B. 2. l. 926.

Eumelus' mares were foremost in the chace,
 As eagles fleet, and of Pheretian race ;
 Bred where Pieria's fruitful fountains flow,
 And train'd by him who bears the silver bow.
 Fierce in the fight, their nostrils breath'd a flame,
 Their height, their colour, and their age the same ;
 O'er fields of death they whirl the rapid car,
 And break the ranks, and thunder through the war.

POPE.

I heard his animating cries,
 And mark'd each courser beauteous to behold,
 Their glitt'ring bitts emboss'd with gold :
 Those in the midst, the yoke that bear,*
 Dappled with silvery marks their hair ;
 And each on either side
 That wind, obedient to the guiding rein,
 With equal swiftness o'er the plain,
 Bright as the flaming gold, with pride
 On snow-white fetlocks bound :
 With rival speed I saw Pelides fly,
 In arms, the whirling chariot nigh,
 Light o'er the pebbled ground.

STROPHE II.

Hence to the numerous fleet I fly,
 A vast and glorious sight,
 To gratify my curious eye,
 A woman's dear delight.
 On the right wing from Phthia's strand
 The Myrmidons, a valiant band,
 In fifty gallant vessels ride ;
 And by the Nereids we behold
 Bright on the prows in sculptur'd gold,
 Achilles' arms are signified.

ANTISTROPHE II.

The Argive ships of equal oars
 Next these their station hold;

* This passage is not only highly pleasing in itself, but very valuable as it gives us a precise account of the manner in which the ancients harnessed four horses to the car: they were ranged abreast; the pair in the middle were yoked, and bore the pole; the two side-horses were managed by reins: therefore the "unreined car," well expresses the biga, or car drawn by two horses.

The son of Talaus leads their powers,
 And Sthenelus the bold.
 In order next th' Athenian train
 In sixty vessels plow the main,
 Their host the son of Theseus leads :
 Adorning the Munychian prows *
 In arms a sculptur'd Pallas glows,
 Inspiring high heroic deeds.

* * * * * * *

[*The second Epode is lost.*]

* * * * * * *

STROPHE III.

Bœotia's host I there survey'd,
 In fifty ships the warriors came :
 An imag'd form each ship display'd,
 Proud argument of Theban fame ;
 High on each sculptur'd prow their Cadmus stands,
 A golden dragon holding in his hands ;
 And Leitus, who boasts his birth
 From those that sprung embattled from the earth,
 Commands their naval war.
 Those, who their race from Phocis draw,
 Rang'd on the foaming flood I saw.
 Oilean Ajax there,
 Equal his numbers, leads the Locrian train,
 Leaving illustrious Thronion's plain.

ANTISTROPHE III.

From high Mycenæ's rampir'd tow'rs,
 Tow'rs by the lab'ring Cyclops wrought,
 The son of Atreus leads his pow'rs ;
 A hundred ships the monarch brought :

* Μωνυχίοις, Monychiis, i. e. Atticis. Markland.

And faithful at his side, as friend with friend,
These eyes beheld the injur'd chief attend :

That for the fair, her house who fled,
Lightly preferring a barbaric bed,

Greece with a gen'rous rage

Might rise and vindicate his cause.

His troops from Pylos Nestor draws,

Reverend the warrior's age ;

On his tall vessels sculptur'd Alpheus stands,

A bull, and seems to spurn the sands.

EPODE III.

From Ænia's stormy coast

By Guneus led twelve vessels plough the tide ;
The chiefs of Elis anchor by their side ;

These through th' extended host

Are call'd the brave Epæan train,

And Eurytus their force commands.

Dash'd by their oars the foaming main

Whitens beneath the Taphian bands ;

Megeus their leader, from that dangerous shore,

Where rough Echinæ's vext rocks roar.

The Salaminian Ajax to the right*

Stretches, the left wing to unite ;

The last in station, o'er the deep

His fleetest vessels circling sweep.

In all their gallant pride

I heard, I saw them stretch : to meet their war

Should the barbaric slight barks dare,

* This supposes that the fleet was ranged in a circular line ; when Ajax, therefore, who was stationed on the left, stretched his squadron towards the right, he so far advanced to meet the ships of Achilles, which formed the right wing, and to unite the two extremities.—*Heath.*

Shatter'd, and sunk beneath the tide,
 They will return no more.
 I heard, I saw ; and all the warlike train
 Faithful my memory shall retain,
 When reach'd my native shore.

ATTENDANT, MENELAUS, CHORUS.

ATTENDANT.

This, Menelaus, is wrong ; thou should'st not do it.

MENELAUS.

Go to : thou would'st be faithful to thy lords !

ATTENDANT.

That is an honour to me, no reproach.

MENELAUS.

Would'st thou do what thou should'st not, thou
 . shalt rue it.

ATTENDANT.

Thou should'st not ope the letter which I bear.

MENELAUS.

Thou should'st not bear what to all Greece is hurt-
 ful.

ATTENDANT.

With others dispute that ; leave this to me.

MENELAUS.

I will not let it go.

ATTENDANT.

Nor will I yield it.

MENELAUS.

Soon shall thy head this sceptre stain with blood.

ATTENDANT.

Nay, it were glorious for my lords to die.

MENELAUS.

Let go : a slave presuming to dispute !

ATTENDANT.

My royal master, we are wrong'd : by force
Thy letter hath he wrested from my hands,
To what behoves him paying no regard.

AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS, ATTENDANT,
CHORUS.

AGAMEMNON.

Why this indecent tumult at my doors ?

ATTENDANT.

My words have greater right than his t' inform
thee.

AGAMEMNON.

Why, Menelaus, this strife with him, this force ?

MENELAUS.

Look, if thou dar'st, at me ; then will I speak.

AGAMEMNON.

Fear I, from Atreus born, to raise mine eye ?

MENELAUS.

Dost thou see this, with basest orders charg'd ?

AGAMEMNON.

I see it : from thy hand first give it back.

MENELAUS.

Not till I've shown all Greece what's written here.

AGAMEMNON.

Know'st thou, this open'd, what thou should'st not
know ?

MENELAUS.

To wring thy heart, opening thy secret baseness.

AGAMEMNON.

Where didst thou take it? Gods, hast thou no shame?

MENELAUS.

Watching from Argos if thy daughter comes.

AGAMEMNON.

On my affairs a spy! How shameless this?

MENELAUS.

Urg'd by my will: for I am not thy slave.

AGAMEMNON.

Have I not leave in' mine own house to rule?

MENELAUS.

How wayward is thy mind, thy present thoughts
At variance with the past, and soon to change!

AGAMEMNON.

Finely thy words are tun'd; but know thou this,
The wily tongue is a detested ill.

MENELAUS.

The wav'ring mind is a base property,
And darkens to our friends: I will convince thee:
But if through pride thou turn thee from the truth,
Small share of praise shalt thou receive from me.
Thou knowest, when thy aim was to command
The troops of Greece at Troy, thy semblance form'd
As if affecting nothing, but thy wish
Most ardent; what humility was thine,
Pressing the hand of each, thy door to all
Was open, to the meanest, and thy speech
To all address'd in order, e'en to those
Who will'd no converse with thee, seeking thus
By courteous manners thy ambitious wish
To purchase. The supreme command obtain'd,
Soon were thy manners chang'd, and to thy friends

Not friendly as before ; nor was access
Easy, oft too denied. Ill it becomes
An honest man, when rais'd to power, to change
His manners, but then most to be approv'd
Firm to his friends, when through his advanc'd state
He most can serve them : this I urge against thee
As my first charge, where first I found thee base.
But when thou cam'st to Aulis, with the troops
Of Greece in arms, to nothing didst thou sink,
Astonish'd at thy fortune, by the gods
Denied a gale to swell thy sails. The Greeks
Requir'd thee to dismiss the ships, nor toil
In vain at Aulis : how dejected then
Thy visage, thy confusion then how great
Not to command the thousand ships, and fill
The fields of Priam with embattled hosts ?
Me then didst thou address, What shall I do,
Or what expedient find, of this command,
Of this high honour not to be depriv'd ?
When Calchas at the hallow'd rites declar'd
That to Diana thou must sacrifice
Thy daughter, and the Grecians then should sail,
With joy thy thoughts were heighten'd, willingly
The virgin as a victim didst thou promise,
And freely, not by force, (urge not that plea)
Dost thou dispatch a message to thy wife
To send thy daughter hither, the pretence
Her nuptials with Achilles. But thy mind
Was soon aversc, and secretly devis'd
Letters of diff'rent import ; now in sooth
Thou wilt not be the murd'rer of thy daughter.
This air is witness, which hath heard these things
Of thee. To thousands this hath chanc'd in tasks

Of arduous nature, freely they engage,
 Then from the high attempt retreat with shame,
 Th' ill judgment of their countrymen in part,
 Justice in part the cause, for in the proof
 They feel their want of power to guard the state.
 But most I mourn th' unhappy fate of Greece,
 Who, prompt her noble vengeance to inflict
 On the barbarians, worthless as they are,
 Shall let them now go scoffing off, through thee,
 And through thy daughter. Never for his wealth
 Would I appoint a ruler o'er the state,
 Or chief in arms : wisdom should mark the man
 Who in his country bears the sov'reign sway :
 Every man sage in council is a leader.

CHORUS.

How dreadful, when 'twixt brothers words arise,
 And fierce disputings kindle into strife !

AGAMEMNON.

For this I will rebuke thee ; but, in brief,
 Not raising high the eye of insolence,
 But with more temperance, because thou art
 My brother ; for a good man loves to act
 With modesty. But, tell me, why with rage
 Dost thou thus swell ? wby roll thy blood-streak'd
 eye ?

Who injures thee ? of what art thou in want ?
 A rich connubial bed, is that thy wish ?
 This to procure thee is not in my power.
 Thou didst possess one, but ill govern it.
 Shall I, who with no fault have e'er been charg'd,
 Suffer for thy ill conduct ? Is thy heart
 Rack'd at my honours ? But a beauteous wife
 In thy fond arms it is thy wish to hold,

Transgressing decency and reason: base
 Of a bad man the pleasures. But if I,
 Before ill-judging, have with sober thought
 My purpose chang'd, must I be therefore deem'd
 Reft of my sense? Thou rather, who hast lost
 A wife that brings thee shame, yet dost with warmth
 Wish to regain her, would the fav'ring god
 Grant thee that fortune. Of the nuptials eager
 The suitors pledg'd to Tyndarus their oath,
 Unwise: the hope, I ween, of the fair bride
 Effected this, more than thy grace or power:
 Take these, and march to war; soon wilt thou find
 What oaths avail ill plighted, with slight thought,
 And by compulsion. But I will not slay
 My children: and thy wishes o'erleap justice,
 The punishment of thy flagitious wife.
 My nights, my days would pass away in tears,
 Should I with outrage and injustice wrong
 Those, who from me deriv'd their birth. These
 things

Have I replied to thee in brief, with ease
 And plainness: but if thou wilt not be wise,
 What concerns me I rightly will appoint.

CHORUS.

These words are different from his former speech,
 And well the father's melting pity show.

MENELAUS.

Ah me unhappy! I have then no friends.

AGAMEMNON.

Yes, if thou wish not to destroy thy friends.

MENELAUS.

How wilt thou show one father gave us birth?

AGAMEMNON.

I would be wise, but not be mad with thee.

MENELAUS.

Friends with their friends in common ought to grieve.

AGAMEMNON.

Be thy deeds friendly, then, not painful to me.

MENELAUS.

And with all Greece should'st thou not bear this pain ?

AGAMEMNON.

All Greeee, and thee, hath Heaven-sent phrenzy seiz'd.

MENELAUS.

Thou gloriest in thy seepstre, and betray'st Thy brother. But to other means I turn, And other friends.

AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS, MESSENGER,
CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

I come, imperial lord
Of Greeee, thy daughter leading, in thine house
Nam'd Iphigenia by thee ; and thy wife
Attends her, Clytemnestra, with thy son
Orestes, sight delightful to thine eyes
After this tedious absentee from thy home.
But wearied with this length of way, beside
A beauteous-flowing fountain they repose,
Themselves refreshing, and their steeds, unyok'd
To taste the fresh grass of the verdant mead.

I run to bring thee notice, that prepar'd
Thou may'st receive them : this the troops have
heard ;
For through the camp swift the report was spread.
That Iphigenia is arriv'd, and all
Haste to the sight desirous to behold
Thy daughter ; for to every eye the great
Appear illustrious, with high splendor grac'd.
Is this her bridal day, some ask, or what
Intended ? Or through fond desire to see
His daughter did th' imperial Agamemnon
Send for the virgin ? Others might'st thou hear,
The princess to Diana, queen of Aulis,
Will they present ? Who shall receive her hand ?
But haste, begin the rites, and crown thy head.
And thou, too, royal Menelaus, prepare
The hymeneals ; let the joyful house
Re-echo to the pipe and festive dance :
For happy to the virgin comes this day.

AGAMEMNON.

'Tis well : thou hast my thanks : but go thou in
All things, if fortune favours, shall be well.—
Ah me, unhappy me, what shall I say,
And whence begin ? In what a chain of fate
Am I enfolded ? Fortune, wiser far
Than all my vain designs, hath closely wrought
Beneath me. What advantages attend
Ignoble birth ? They are allow'd to weep,
And utter sad complaints : but to the noble
This is denied ; led by the pride of rank,
Which rules us, to the people we are slaves.
I am indeed ashame'd to drop the tear,
And not to drop the tear I am ashame'd,

Fallen as I am on these great miseries.
 Well, let it be : but how shall I address
 My wife, or how receive her ? with what eye
 Look on her ? For to all my former ills,
 Coming unbidden, she hath added weight
 Of new distress : yet decency requir'd
 Her presence with her daughter, to attend
 Her nuptials, and present the dearest gifts :
 There will she find me false. But thee, O thee,
 Unhappy bride, (bride call I thee ! how soon
 To Pluto to be wedded !) how I pity !
 Methinks I hear her suppliant voice thus speak,
 " My father, wilt thou kill me ? May'st thou make
 Thyself such nuptials, and whoe'er to thee
 Is dear." Orestes, standing near, shall cry
 In accents inarticulate, his speech
 As yet unform'd, articulate to me.
 Unhappy me ! what ruin hath the son
 Of Priam brought on me ! This Paris caus'd,
 When he espous'd the faithless Helena.

CHORUS.

I, as a woman and a stranger ought,
 Am mov'd with pity at a monarch's woes.

MENELAUS.

Give me thy hand, my brother, let me clasp it.

AGAMEMNON.

I give it : thou art conqueror, I a wretch.

MENELAUS.

By Pelops, call'd the father of thy father
 And mine ; by Atreus, whence we draw our birth,
 I swear, that what I now shall say to thee
 Comes from my heart, nought feign'd, but what I
 think.

When from thine eye I saw thee drop the tear,
I pitied thee, and sympathizing dropp'd
Myself a tear : its former reas'nings now
My soul foregoes, no more unkind to thee,
But, as thou feelest, feels : nay, I exhort thee
Neither to slay thy daughter, nor to rank
What concerns me most high : it is not just
That grief should rend thy heart, whilst my affairs
Go pleasantly ; that any of thy house
Should die, whilst mine behold the light : for what
Can be my purpose ? Might I not contract
Other illustrious nuptials, if my wish
Were other nuptials ? But at such a price,
My brother's ruin, which behoves me least,
Should I recover Helena, an ill
Dear with a blessing purchas'd ? Folly rul'd
Before, and youth, but on a nearer view
I see what 'tis to yield a child to death.
Besides, th' unhappy virgin, near allied
By ties of consanguinity, excites
My pity, destin'd, for a nuptial bed,
To fall a victim : what hath she to do,
Thy virgin daughter, with my Helena :
Discharg'd from Aulis let the troops depart.
And thou, my brother, cease to dew thine eyes
With tears, which cause the drops to start in mine.
Touching thy daughter hast thou oracles
Which respect me ; no more be that respect ;
My part I cede to thee : my thoughts are chang'd
From cruel, and I feel what I should feel :
Nature returns, and all a brother's love
Warm in my heart revives : of no bad man
The manners these, to follow still the best.

CHORUS.

Generous thy words, and worthy Tantalus
The son of Jove : thou dost not shame thy birth.

AGAMEMNON.

Now I applaud thee : for beyond my thought
Rightly thy words conclude, and worthy thee.

MENELAUS.

For love and for ambition variance oft *
Rises 'twixt brothers : but my soul abhors
This mutual harshness of unnatural strife.

AGAMEMNON.

But dire necessity compels me now
My daughter's bloody slaughter to complete.

MENELAUS.

Who shall compel thee to destroy thy child ?

AGAMEMNON.

The whole assembled host of Greece in arms.

MENELAUS.

Not if to Argos her thou send again.

AGAMEMNON.

That might be secret : this must be reveal'd.

MENELAUS.

What ? Of the people have not too great dread.

AGAMEMNON.

The oracle will Calchas sound to all.

MENELAUS.

Not if e'er that he die : an easy thing.

AGAMEMNON.

Vain-glorious is the whole prophetic breed.

MENELAUS.

And of no use when present, of no good.

* This alludes to the quarrel between Atreus and Thyestes.

AGAMEMNON.

But seest thou not what enters now my thought ?

MENELAUS.

Can I conjecture what thou dost not speak ?

AGAMEMNON.

He of the race of Sisyphus knows all.

MENELAUS.

Nor thee, nor me, will e'er Ulysses harm.

AGAMEMNON.

Artful, the people, as he wills, he leads.

MENELAUS.

With vanity, a mighty ill, possess'd.

AGAMEMNON.

Think, then, thou seest him stand amidst the troops,
Declaring to them all the oracle
Announc'd by Calchas ; how this sacrifice
I promis'd to Diana, then refus'd.

Soon will he lead the Grecians, and excite them,
Me in their fury having slain, and thee,
To sacrifice the virgin. Should I fly
To Argos, marching thither they will raze
Her rampires by the Cyclops rais'd, and spread
Destruction o'er the land. Unhappy me,
Such ills are mine, to this severe distress
Brought by the gods ! Yet one thing make thy care,
Take heed, as through the host thy steps return,
These tidings reach not Clytemnestra's ear,
Till I the virgin to th' infernal king
Shall have presented, that I may abide
With as few tears as may be my hard fate.
Silence, ye female strangers, be your part.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

How blest their golden days, who prove
 The gentle joys of temp'rate Love,
 When modest Venus on the couch attends,
 Pleas'd with tranquillity to dwell !
 But high the madd'ning passions swell,
 When both his bows the bright-hair'd tyrant bends :
 One, by the Graces strung, imparts
 Pure joys that brighten in our hearts ;
 And one, life's wild tumultuous war.
 Far, beauteous queen, from us may this be far ;
 Mine be Love's pure and temp'rate grace,
 The holy flame of chaste desire,
 Mild Venus, in my breast inspire ;
 There never have ungovern'd passion place !

ANTISTROPHE.

Nature in man we diff'r'ing find,
 And diff'rent manners mark his mind ;
 When good, they give each excellence to spring :
 And education's sage control
 To every virtue forms the soul :
 Meek Modesty then Wisdom loves to bring,
 She loves to bring each various grace,
 Which shows where Duty hath its place,
 Whence Glory beams divinely bright,
 And pours on life unfailing streams of light.
 Virtues in woman fairest shine,
 That silent guard Love's holy flame ;
 Man's various worth ascends to fame

Most, when t' exalt the state his great design.

EPODE.

Thence, Paris, didst thou come,
 Where, on Ida's pastur'd brow
 Train'd the snowy herds among,
 Thine was the barbaric song,
 Thine to bid the sweet notes flow,
 Whilst thy Phrygian pipe breathes measures,
 Caught from those harmonious treasures
 Which Olympus taught his reed.*
 Unmilk'd herds around thee feed,
 Whilst the contending beauties of the skies
 From thee expect the prize.
 Hence camest thou to the Grecian shore,
 The ivy-cinctur'd house before :
 Thy eyes the flames of love inspire,
 And Helen, as she gaz'd, receiv'd the fire :
 Her charms too rush'd upon thy soul,
 And madness reign'd without control,
 Hence discord, discord, calls to war :
 With many a ship, with many a spear
 Greece rushes on, impetuous to destroy
 The rampir'd walls of Troy.

How splendid are the fortunes of the great !
 See, Iphigenia, daughter of the king,
 And Clytemnestra, sprung from Tyndarus,
 My queen ! from noble ancestors they draw
 Their birth, and are to fortune's highest state

* For an account of Olympus, the celebrated inventor of the Enharmonic Genus, consult Dr. Burney's History of the Greek Music, p. 360.

Exalted : to th' inferior ranks of life
The powerful and the wealthy are as gods.
Daughters of Chalcis, near them let us stand,
And courteous in our hands receive the queen,
As from her car she to the ground descends,
With duteous zeal, that she may tread secure ;
And that th' illustrious daughter of the king
On her arrival nothing may disturb :
For, strangers as we are, let us not cause
These Argive strangers trouble or affright.

CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, ATTENDANTS, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

This as a prosp'rous omen I accept,
Thy courtesy and gentleness of speech :
And hence conceive I hope that I am come
To happy nuptials leading her a bride.
But from the chariot take the dowral gifts
Brought with me for the virgin ; to the house
Bear them with faithful care. My daughter, quit
The harness'd chariot, and thy delicate foot
Place on the ground. Ye females, in your arms
Receive her ; she is weak ; and from the car
Conduct her down : stretch one of you your hand,
Supporting me, that I may leave this seat
In seemly manner. Some before the yoke
Stand nigh the horses, for their eye is quick,
Soon startled, and unruly : now receive
This child, Orestes, Agamemnon's son,
For he is yet an infant. Dost thou sleep,

My son ? The rolling chariot hath subdued thee
 Wake to thy sister's marriage happily ;
 Th' alliance of a noble youth, thyself
 Noble, shalt thou receive, the godlike son
 Of Thetis. Come, my daughter, near me stand,
 Stand near thy mother, Iphigenia, show
 These strangers how supremely I am blest
 In thee ; and here address thee to thy father.

IPHIGENIA.

Would it offend my mother, should I run
 And throw myself into my father's arms ?

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA,
 CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Imperial chief of Greece, my honour'd lord,
 To thy commands obedient we are come.

IPHIGENIA.

My father, to thy arms I wish to run,
 Clasp'd to thy bosom ; dear to me thy sight
 After such absence : be not angry with me.

AGAMEMNON.

Enjoy thy wish : of all my children thou
 Hast of thy father always been most fond.

IPHIGENIA.

Absent so long, with joy I look on thee.

AGAMEMNON.

And I on thee : so this is mutual joy.

IPHIGENIA.

Well hast thou done to bring me to thy presence.

AGAMEMNON.

If well, or not well done, I cannot say.

IPHIGENIA.

A gloom hangs on thee 'midst thy joy to see me.

AGAMEMNON.

A king and chief hath many anxious cares.

IPHIGENIA.

But let me have thee now; think not of cares.

AGAMEMNON.

'Thou hast me all: each thought is bent on thee.

IPHIGENIA.

Smooth then thy brow, and look with fondness on
me.

AGAMEMNON.

To see thee gives me joy, such joy as mine.

IPHIGENIA.

Yet from thy melting eye thou pour'st the tear.

AGAMEMNON.

Long, very long the absence to ensue.

IPHIGENIA.

I know not, dearest father, what this means.

AGAMEMNON.

Thy prudent speech makes me more pity thee.

IPHIGENIA.

Might it divert thee, idly will I talk.

AGAMEMNON.

Can I be silent? O, thou hast my thanks.

IPHIGENIA.

At home, my father, with thy children stay.

AGAMEMNON.

I wish it: but, that wish denied, I grieve.

IPHIGENIA.

A mischief on the war, and Sparta's wrongs!

AGAMEMNON.

Others will feel the mischief; I have felt it.

IPHIGENIA.

How long thy absence in the bay of Aulis!

AGAMEMNON.

Something detains me yet, detains the host.

IPHIGENIA.

Where, father, do they say the Phrygians dwell?

AGAMEMNON.

Where, O, that Priam's Paris ne'er had liv'd!

IPHIGENIA.

And when thou leav'st me is the voyage long?

AGAMEMNON.

To the same place thou with thy father goest.

IPHIGENIA.

O that with honour I might sail with thee!

AGAMEMNON.

Thou shalt, where thou thy father shalt remember.

IPHIGENIA.

Go I alone, or sails my mother with me?

AGAMEMNON.

Alone: nor father there, nor mother goes.

IPHIGENIA.

Dost thou, then, place me in some other house?

AGAMEMNON.

Ask not: for virgins should not know these things.

IPHIGENIA.

Haste to me then from Troy, victorious there.

AGAMEMNON.

Here first I must present a sacrifice.

IPHIGENIA.

Those rites thou with the priests must well prepare.

AGAMEMNON.

Thou shalt be witness, nigh the lavers plac'd.

IPHIGENIA.

Shall we, then, round the altar raise the song ?

AGAMEMNON.

Thee happier than myself in this I deem,
 That thou art ignorant, But go thou in,
 Present thee to the virgins. O, that kiss,
 That dear embrace, how painful from a child,
 Who from a father must so long be absent !
 Ah me, that breast, those cheeks, those golden
 tresses !

What piercing sorrows hath the Phrygian state
 And Helen caus'd us ! But I check my words :
 For when I touch thee, in my melting eyes
 The sudden moisture rises : go thou in.—
 Daughter of Leda, if with pity touch'd
 I feel my grief too strong, for that I soon
 Shall to Achilles my dear child consign,
 Forgive me : happy is it so to place
 A daughter, yet it pains a father's heart
 When he delivcrs to another house
 A child, the object of his tender care.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Nor is my heart insensible : I feel,
 Be thou assur'd, an equal grief, nor want
 From thee monitions, when I lead the virgin
 With hymeneal rites ; but custom, join'd
 With time, will check it. Well : his name I know,
 To whom thou hast betroth'd thy daughter ; more
 I wish to know, his lineage whence he draws.

AGAMEMNON.

Ægina was the daughter of Asopus.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

With her what mortal wedded, or what god ?

AGAMEMNON.

Jove, sire of Æacus, Oenone's chief.*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What son of Æacus possess'd this house ?

AGAMEMNON.

Peleus : the daughter he of Nereus weds.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

By force, or by the god's consent obtain'd ?

AGAMEMNON.

Her father gave her, first by Jove betroth'd.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Where did he wed her ? in the ocean waves ?

AGAMEMNON.

Where Chiron dwells, on Pelion's awful heights.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'The Centaur race, they say, inhabit there.

AGAMEMNON.

The gods there present grac'd his nuptial feast.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Achilles did the sire, or Thetis train ?

AGAMEMNON.

Chiron, that from bad men he might not learn.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Wise he who took, wise they who gave the charge.

* Oenone is an island before Attica, afterwards called by Æacus Ægina, in honour of his mother.—Pausan. Corinth.—Scholiast on Homer, L. 2. So Ovid,

Oenopiam Minos petit Æacideia regna.

Oenopiam veteres appellavere : sed ipse

Æacus Æginam genetricis nomine dixit.

AGAMEMNON.

Such is the man, who shall thy daughter wed.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Not disapprov'd : but where in Greece his seat ?

AGAMEMNON.

Where flows Apidanus through Phthia's bounds.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thine and my daughter thither will he lead ?

AGAMEMNON.

When he obtains her, this will be his care.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Blest may they be ! But when the bridal day ?

AGAMEMNON.

Soon as the moon's propitious circle fills.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Is for the bride the previous victim slain ?

AGAMEMNON.

Soon shall it : this employs my present thought.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And wilt thou next the nuptial feast prepare ?

AGAMEMNON.

When I have offer'd what the gods require.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Where for the females shall we deck the feast ?

AGAMEMNON.

Here, where the gallant fleet at anchor rides.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Amply supply, then, what th' occasion claims.

AGAMEMNON.

Know'st thou what now I wish thee do ? Obey me.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

In what ? Thou long hast train'd me to obey.

AGAMEMNON.

We in the place where now the bridegroom is—
CLYTEMNESTRA.

Without the mother! what to me belongs—
AGAMEMNON.

Will give thy daughter 'midst th' assembled Greeks.
CLYTEMNESTRA.

And where, whilst this is doing, shall I be?
AGAMEMNON.

To Argos go, thy charge the virgins there.
CLYTEMNESTRA.

And leave my daughter? who shall raise the torch?
AGAMEMNON.

The light, to deck the nuptials, I will hold.
CLYTEMNESTRA.

Custom forbids: nor would'st thou deem it seemly.
AGAMEMNON.

Nor decent that thou mix with martial troops.
CLYTEMNESTRA.

But decent that the mother give the daughter.
AGAMEMNON.

Nor leave the younger in the house alone.
CLYTEMNESTRA.

In close apartments they are guarded well.
AGAMEMNON.

Let me persuade thee.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

By the potent queen,
Goddess of Argos, no. Of things abroad
Take thou the charge: within the house my care
Shall deck the virgin's nuptials, as is meet.

(She goes in.)

AGAMEMNON.

Unhappy me ! in vain I came, my hopes
 Are vanish'd : out of sight it was my wish
 To send my wife : thus I devise, thus form
 My wily purpose, studious to beguile
 Those dearest to my soul, in all my aims
 Confounded. Hence to Calchas will I go
 The Seer, inquiring what the goddess wills,
 To me unfortunate, a grief to Greece.
 A wise man in his house should find a wife
 Gentle and courteous, or no wife at all.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

To Simois, and his silver tide
 In eddies whirling through the plain,
 The fleet of Greece in gallant pride
 Vengeful shall bear this martial train ;
 To Ilion's rampir'd towers shall bear,
 And Troy by Phœbus lov'd, the war.
 Cassandra there, when on her soul
 The god's prophetic transports roll,
 Her brows with verdant laurel loves to bind,
 Her yellow tresses streaming to the wind.

ANTISTROPHE.

The Trojans high on Ilium's towers,
 And round the walls of Troy shall stand,
 When Mars to Simois leads his powers,
 And furious ploughs the hostile strand ;

From Priam's ruin'd house to bear
 Again to Greece the fatal fair,
 Whose brothers, sons of Jove, on high
 Twin stars adorn the spangled sky,
 Rushing to war his brazen shield be rears,
 And glitt'ring round him blaze the Grecian spears.

EPODE.

Phrygian Pergamus around,
 Walls of rock with turrets crown'd,
 Mars the furious war shall lead :
 Blood his flaming sword shall stain,
 As from the trunk he hews the warrior's head,
 And to the dust shakes Troy's proud walls again.
 Virgins with their woes opprest,
 And Priam's queen their fall lament ;
 Jove-born Helen beats her breast,
 In anguish, from her lover rent.
 From me, from mine be far the fate
 Which Lydia's gorgeous dames with sighs,
 Whilst Troy's sad matrons wipe their dewy eyes,
 In mutual converse o'er the web relate,
 " Who will not rend her crisped hair,
 Who will not pour the gushing tear,
 Low sunk in dust our ruin'd walls ?
 Bright daughter of the bird, whose neck
 Arch'd in proud state the white plumes deck,
 For thee in dust our country falls :
 If true the fame that mighty Jove
 Chang'd to a Swan sought Leda's love :
 Or fabling poets from Pieria's spring
 Their wanton and indecent legends bring."

ACHILLES, CHORUS.

ACHILLES.

Where is the leader of the Grecian host !
 Who of th' attendants tells him that Achilles,
 The son of Peleus, seeks him at the gate ?—
 Different our state, who nigh the Euripus
 Wait here : unwedded some, their houses left
 In solitude, here sit upon the shore ;
 And childless others leave their nuptial beds ;
 Such ardour, not without the gods, through Greece
 Flames for this war. What touches me, to speak
 Is mine ; let others, what their need requires,
 Themselves explain. Thessalia's pleasant fields
 And Peleus leaving, at the narrow surge
 Of Euripus I wait, the Myrmidons
 Restraining ; with impatient instance oft
 They urge me, “ why, Achilles, stay we here ?
 What tedious length of time is yet to pass,
 To Ilium ere we sail ? would'st thou do aught ?
 Do it, or lead us home ; nor here await
 The sons of Atreus, and their cold delays.”

CLYTEMNESTRA, ACHILLES, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Son of the goddess Thetis, in the house
 Hearing thy words I come without the gates.

ACHILLES.

O rever'd modesty, whom do mine eyes
Behold? her form bears dignity and grace.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Not strange thou know'st us not, before not seen:
But thy regard to modesty I praise.

ACHILLES.

Who art thou? to the Grecian camp why come,
A woman 'midst a host of men in arms?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Daughter of Leda, Clytemnestra nam'd,
Am I, the royal Agamemnon's wife.

ACHILLES.

Well hast thou answer'd, and in brief: but shame
Were mine with wedded dames to hold discourse.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Stay: wherefore dost thou fly me? with my hand
Join thy right hand, pledge of thy happy nuptials.

ACHILLES.

My hand with thine! to Agamemnon this
Were wrong, if, what I have no right, I touch.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Son of the sea-born Nereid, thou hast right,
Much right, since thou my daughter soon wilt wed.

ACHILLES.

Wed, dost thou say? amazement chains my tongue:
What secret purpose hath thy strange discourse?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis ever thus: the modest, 'midst new friends,
At mention of their nuptials are ashamed.

ACHILLES.

Ne'er did I woo thy daughter: ne'er did word
Of nuptials from th' Atridæ reach my ear.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What may this mean? 'Thou wond'rest at my words;
And equal wonder thine excite in me.

ACHILLES.

All is conjecture, common to us both,
Both haply are by words alike deceiv'd.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I am abus'd, according nuptials here
Never design'd, it seems: I blush at this.

ACHILLES.

Some one perchance 'gainst thee and me hath fram'd
This mock: regard it not; light let it pass.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Farewell: I cannot look upon thy face,
Basely abus'd, and made a liar thus.

ACHILLES.

Thee, too, I bid farewell: within the house
Inquiries from thy husband will I make.

ATTENDANT, CLYTEMNESTRA, ACHILLES,
CHORUS.

ATTENDANT.

Stay, stranger of the race of Æacus,
Stay, goddess-born: daughter of Leda, stay.

ACHILLES.

Who from the gates calls with this earnest voice?

ATTENDANT.

A slave: in that I boast not: no proud vaunt
My fortune will admit.

ACHILLES.

Whose slave? not mine:
For I with Agamemnon have no share.

ATTENDANT.

Hers, who stands here before the house, the gift
Of Tyndarus her father.

ACHILLES.

Well: we stay:
What would'st thou? why hast thou detain'd me?
speak?

ATTENDANT.

Are you alone before this royal house?

ACHILLES.

Speak as to us alone: come from the gates.

ATTENDANT.

O fortune, and my provident caution, save
Those whom I wish to save?

ACHILLES.

Thy words portend
Something not brief; and seem of import high.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Delay not for my hand: speak what thou would'st.

ATTENDANT.

Dost thou then know me, who I am, to thee
And to thy children how benevolent?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I know thee, an old servant of my house.

ATTENDANT.

And to the royal Agamemnon giv'n
Part of thy dowry.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

With us didst thou come
To Argos, and hast there been always mine.

ATTENDANT.

So is it: hence to thee I bear good will,
But to thy husband less.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Well then, to me,
Whate'er thy wish to speak, at length disclose.

ATTENDANT.

Thy daughter will her father slay, her father
With his own hand.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

How! I abhor thy words,
Old man: thou art not in thy perfect sense.

ATTENDANT.

Striking her white neck with the ruthless sword.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Unhappy me! hath madness seiz'd his mind?

ATTENDANT.

No: save to thee and to thy daughter, sound
His sense: in this he errs from reason wide.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What cause? what fury fires him to the deed?

ATTENDANT.

The oracles, and Calchas, that the troops
May sail.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Sail whither? Wretched me! She, too,
How wretched, whom her father will destroy!

ATTENDANT.

To the proud seats of Troy, thence to bring back
Helen, the Spartan's wife.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Of her return
Is Iphigenia doom'd the fatal price?

ATTENDANT.

E'en so : thy daughter will her father slay
A victim to Diana.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

From my home
To win me were these nuptials then devis'd ?

ATTENDANT.

Thy daughter that with pleasure thou might'st
lead
To wed Achilles.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

To perdition then
Thou com'st, my daughter, and thy mother with
thee.

ATTENDANT.

Piteous of both the suff'rings, and th' attempt
Of Agamemnon dreadful.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

With my woes
I sink, mine eye no longer holds the tear.

ATTENDANT.

Painful the tear that falls for children lost.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

But whence, old man, know'st thou, or heard'st
thou this ?

ATTENDANT.

I took my way, charg'd with a letter to thee,
Since that which had been sent.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Its purport what ?

Forbidding, or exhorting me to bring
My daughter to her death ?

ATTENDANT.

This not to bring her
Gave charge : for wise were then thy husband's
thoughts.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Charg'd with this letter to me, why to me
Didst thou not give it ?

ATTENDANT.

Menelaus by force
Took it away, the author of these ills.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Son of the sea-born Nereid, son of Peleus,
Dost thou hear this ?

ACHILLES.

What makes thee wretched, lady,
I hear : and ill what touches me I brook.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

My daughter they will slay, the false pretence
Thy nuptials.

ACHILLES.

On thy husband I too charge
Much blame, nor light doth my resentment rise.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Low at thy knees I will not blush to fall,
Of mortal birth to one of heavenly race.
Why should I now be proud : or what demands,
More than a daughter's life, my anxious care ?
Protect, O goddess-born, a wretched mother ;
Protect a virgin call'd thy bride : her head
With garlands, ah, in vain ! yet did I crown,
And led her as by thee to be espous'd ;
Now to be slain I bring her : but on thee,
If thou protect her not, reproach will fall ;

For, though not join'd in marriage, thou wast call'd
 The husband of the virgin. By this cheek,
 By this right hand, by her that gave thee birth ;
 (For me thy name hath ruin'd, and from thee
 I therefore claim protection :) I have now
 No altar, but thy knee, to which to fly,
 I have no friend, but thee : the fell designs
 Of Agamemnon's ruthless heart thou hear'st ;
 And I, a woman, as thou seest, am come
 To this unruly camp, in mischiefs bold,
 Of use but when they list. If thou shalt dare
 Stretch forth thine hand to aid me, I shall find
 Safety : if not, then am I lost indeed.

CHORUS.

To be a mother is the amplest source
 Of nature's dear affections : this to all
 Is common, for their children anxious thought.

ACHILLES.

To noblest thoughts my tow'ring soul is rais'd,
 Which at the woes of others knows to melt,
 And bear with moderation fortune's smiles.

CHORUS.

These are the men, who, train'd in reason's lore,
 As wisdom guides them, form their life aright.

ACHILLES.

There is a time, when not to build too much
 On our own wisdom is agreeable :
 But then there is a time, when to exert
 Our judgment is of use. By Chiron train'd,
 Of mortals the most righteous, I have learn'd
 Simplicity of manners. To the sons
 Of Atreus, when their high commands are stamp'd
 With honour, my obedience shall be paid :

Where honour bids not, I shall not obey :
 But my free nature here, and when at Troy,
 Preserv'd, my spear shall to my utmost power
 Add glory to the war. But thee, oppress'd
 With miseries, and by those most dear to thee,
 Far as a young man may, so strong I feel
 The touch of pity, thee will I protect ;
 And never shall thy daughter, who was call'd
 Mine, by her father's hand be slain ; to weave
 His wily trains thy husband ne'er shall make
 Me his pretext ; for so my name would slay
 Thy daughter, though it lifted not the sword.
 The cause indeed thy husband ; yet not pure
 My person, if through me, and through my nup-
 tials,
 The virgin perish, suffering dreadful things,
 And wrongs, at which astonish'd nature starts.
 I were the basest of the Greeks, a thing
 Nought worth, (and Menelaus might well be
 rank'd
 'Mongst men) no more the son of Peleus deem'd,
 But of some cruel dæmon, should my name,
 Pleaded to screen thy husband's purpose, kill her.
 By Nereus, who beneath the wat'ry waves
 Was train'd, the sire of Thetis, whence my birth,
 The royal Agamemnon shall not touch
 Thy daughter, with his finger shall not touch her,
 Nor e'en her robes ; else * Sipylus, a mean
 Barbaric town, from whence our chiefs derive
 Their race, shall be illustrious, and my realm,

* See Pindar's first Olympic Ode, and the Scholiast, Strophe 2.

Phthia, be slighted as unknown to fame.
 His lustral lavers, and his salted cakes,
 With sorrow shall the prophet Calchas bear
 Away. The prophet! what is he? a man
 Who speaks 'mongst many falsehoods but few
 truths,
 Whene'er chance leads him to speak true; when
 false,
 The prophet is no more. With nuptial rites
 Why should I say how many virgins sue
 To be united to me? But of that
 No more. The royal Agamemnon wrongs me,
 Greatly he wrongs me: ought he not from me,
 Would he betroth his daughter, ask my name?
 Th' assent of Clytemnestra then with ease
 Had I obtain'd to give her daughter to me.
 I to the Greeks had giv'n her, if to Troy
 For this their course were check'd; the public
 good
 Of those, with whom I join my arms, t' exalt
 I should not have refus'd: but with the chiefs
 I now am nothing, held of no esteem
 To act, or not to act, in glory's cause.
 But soon this sword shall know whom, ere to Troy
 I come, with drops of blood I shall distain,
 Whoe'er he be that shall attempt to take
 Thy daughter from me: rest thou then in peace;
 I, as a guardian god, am come to thee:
 Great is the contest, yet it shall be prov'd.
 CHORUS.
 Worthy, O son of Peleus, of thyself,
 Worthy the sea-born goddess, are thy words.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

How shall I praise thee, that due bounds my words
 Exceed not, nor beneath thy merit sink,
 Thy grace impairing : for the good, when prais'd,
 Feel something of disgust, if to excess
 Commended. But I blush at words, that raise
 Pity at private woes, whilst of my ills
 No share is thine : yet lovely is the sight,
 When, stranger though he be, to the distress'd
 A good man gives assistance. Pity me ;
 My suff'rings call for pity : when I thought
 To have thee for a son, I fondly fed
 A false and flatt'ring hope. To thee perchance,
 And to thy future nuptials, this might be
 An omen, should my daughter die ; 'gainst this
 Behoves thee guard. Well did thy words be-
 gin,

And well they ended : be it then thy will,
 My daughter shall be sav'd. Wilt thou she fall
 A suppliant at thy knees ? this ill becomes
 A virgin ; yet, if such thy will, with all
 Her blushes shall she come, and in her eye
 Ingenuous modesty : or the same grace
 Shall I, if absent she, obtain from thee ?

ACHILLES.

Let her remain within : for modesty
 With her own modest dignity is pleas'd.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Yet must we sue to thee with earnest prayer.

ACHILLES.

Nor bring thy daughter, lady, to our sight,
 Nor ours be rude reproach. Th' assembled host,

At leisure from their own domestic cares,
 Loves the malignant jest, and sland'rous tale.
 Suppliant, or not, alike shall you obtain
 From me this grace : the contest shall be mine,
 Great as it is, to free you from your ills.
 Of one thing be assur'd, ne'er shall my tongue
 Utter a falsehood ; if I speak untruth,
 And mock thee with vain promise, let me die :
 But as I save thy daughter may I live.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O be thou blest, thus aiding the unhappy !

ACHILLES.

Now hear me, how success may best be ours.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What would'st thou ? my attention thou may'st
 claim.

ACHILLES.

The father's purpose let persuasion change.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

He, void of spirit, too much fears the host.

ACHILLES.

Yet reason o'er the spiritless prevails.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Small are my hopes : yet, say, what must I do ?

ACHILLES.

First, be a suppliant to him not to slay
 His children : if rejected, come to me.
 If thy intreaties win him, of my aid
 There is no need ; thy daughter's life is sav'd,
 I with my friend shall be on better terms,
 And nought of blame the army to my charge
 Can then impute, if I by reason wish
 To effect my purpose, not by violence.

Well to thy warmest wish may this succeed,
And to thy friends', accomplish'd without me.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

How wise thy words ! whate'er to thee seems right,
Shall be attempted : should I not effect
The things I wish, where shall I see thee next,
Or whither bend my wretched steps to find
Thy hand, my firm protector 'gainst these ills ?

ACHILLES.

Far as occasion shall require, myself
Will be thy guard. But with disorder'd step
Let no one see thee hurrying through the throng
Of Grecians, nor disgrace thy father's house :
On Tyndarus unmerited would fall
Aught of ill fame, for he is great in Greece.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

It shall be so : lead thou : on thee to wait
Me it behoves. If there are gods, on thee,
Just as thou art, their blessings must attend :
If not, to what effect is all our toil ?

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

What were the strains that Hymen gave to swell,*
The Lybian pipe its warbles sweet
Attemp'ring to the chorded shell,
That loves to guide the mazy-winding feet,
Whilst the whisp'ring reed around

* The reading of Markland is followed in this Ode.

Breathes a soft responsive sound,
 When to the feast of gods on Pelion's brow
 The golden-sandal'd Muses took their way,
 Loose to the gale their beauteous tresses flow,
 Thee, Peleus, gracing, and thy bridal day,
 As they pierce the tangled grove,
 O'er the mountain as they rove,
 Where the Centaur race reside,
 Peleus and his lovely bride
 They hail, and those wild scenes among
 Pour the mellifluous song.

The Phrygian Ganimede of form divine,
 A royal youth of Dardan race
 Advanc'd the feasts of Jove to grace,
 Pour'd from the glowing bowls the sparkling wine.
 Fifty nymphs the white sands o'er,
 Daughters they of Nereus hoar,
 To the nuptials' light advance,
 And weave the circling dance.

ANTISTROPHE.

The Centaurs waving high their spears of pine,
 Their heads with grassy garlands crown'd,
 Came to the bowls, the feast divine,
 Their hoofs swift-bounding o'er the rattling ground.
 There the Nymphs of Thessaly
 Rais'd their tuneful voices high ;
 The prophet Phœbus join'd the solemn strain,
 And Chiron skill'd to trace the Fates' decree,
 " Daughter of Nereus," sung the raptur'd train,
 " A son, bright beam of beauty, shall from thee
 Draw his birth, who will advance
 Dreadful with his flaming lance,

With his Myrmidons that wield
 Fierce in fight the spear and shield,
 To th' illustrious realms of Troy,
 And her proud towers destroy :
 His manly limbs resplendent arms enfold ;
 Vulcan, at the mother's prayer,
 Shall the glorious gift prepare,
 And all the hero blaze in burnish'd gold."

Thus when Peleus won his bride,
 Of the Nereid train the pride,
 Came the gods in bright array
 To grace their nuptial day.

EPODE.

But thee, unhappy maid, thy head.

With flow'ry garlands Greece shall crown ;
 As from the mountain-cave's cool shade
 Some beauteous heifer coming down,
 Her neck no rude yoke knows, decreed
 A victim at some shrine to bleed.
 But now a human neck must bow,
 And now the virgins's blood must flow,
 Not train'd the sylvan wilds among
 To rustic pipe, or pastoral song :
 Her the fond mother deck'd with pride
 As to some Grecian chief a bride.
 The lovely form, the beauteous face,
 And modest virtue's blushing grace
 Avail no more : in evil hour
 Impiety hath seiz'd the power :
 A slighted out-cast Virtue fails,
 Injustice o'er the laws prevails :
 The common danger none despises,
 Th' impending vengeance of the skies.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I am come forth, if haply I may see
 My husband ; long his absence since he left
 The house. In tears is my unhappy daughter,
 And heaves the frequent sigh, since she hath heard
 The death to which her father destines her.
 I spoke of one that is approaching nigh,
 This Agamemnon, who will soon be found
 Daring against his children impious deeds.

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

AGAMEMNON.

Daughter of Leda, to my wish I find thee
 Before the house, that from my daughter's ear
 Apart I may speak words, which ill beseems
 A virgin, soon to be a bride, to hear.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What is it? Let not the occasion pass.

AGAMEMNON.

Send now thy daughter to her father's charge
 Committed; for the lavers ready stand,
 The salted cakes, which o'er the lustral fire
 The hand must cast, the heifers too, whose blood
 Must in black streams, before the nuptials, flow
 To the chaste queen Diana, are prepar'd.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thy words indeed are gracious, but thy deeds
I know not, should I name them, how to praise.
Yet come thou forth, my daughter, for to thee
Are all thy father's purposes well known ;
And bring thy brother, bring Orestes, wrapt
Close in thy vests, my child.—See, she is here
In prompt obedience to thee : what for her,
What for myself is meet, that shall I speak.

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA,
CHORUS.

AGAMEMNON.

Why weeps my daughter ? cheerful now no more
Thy look, nor pleasant : wherefore is thine eye
Fix'd on the ground, thy robe before it held ?

IPHIGENIA.

Ah me ? whence first shall I begin to speak
My ills ? for all in ills have found a first,
A last, a middle, and successive train.

AGAMEMNON.

Why is it that you all are drawn together,
With terror and confusion in your looks ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Answer to what I ask with honest truth.

AGAMEMNON.

Speak freely : to be question'd is my wish.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thine and my daughter art thou bent to slay ?

AGAMEMNON.

Ah, what a question, what suspicion this !

CLYTEMNESTRA.

To this without evasion answer first.

AGAMEMNON.

Ask what is meet, thou what is meet shalt hear.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I ask this only; to this only speak.

AGAMEMNON.

O fate! O fortune! O my awful doom!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And mine, and hers, one to us wretched three!

AGAMEMNON.

In what have I done wrong?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Canst thou ask this
Of me? thy purpose is unwise and ill.

AGAMEMNON.

I am undone: my secrets are betray'd.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I have heard all, know all, which thou would'st do
Against me: e'en thy silence and thy sighs
Confess it: labour not to give it words.

AGAMEMNON.

Lo, I am silent; for to misery
I should add shamelessness by speaking false.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Now hear me; for my thoughts will I unfold
In no obscure and colour'd mode of speech.
First, then, for first with this will I upbraid thee,
Me didst thou wed against my will,* and seize

* Pausanias, Corinthiac. slightly mentions this history, and takes notice of the tomb of Tantalus, but from traditional report only; neither is he able to determine whether this Tantalus was the son of Thyestes or of Bronteus.

By force ; my former husband Tantalus
By thee was slain ; by thee my infant son,
Torn from my breast by violence, was whirl'd
And dash'd against the ground : the sons of Jove,
My brothers, glitt'ring on their steeds in arms
Advanc'd against thee ; but old Tyndarus,
My father, sav'd thee at his knees become
A suppliant ; and hence didst thou obtain
My bed : to thee and to thy house my thoughts
Thus reconcil'd, thou shalt thyself attest .
How irreproachable a wife I was,
How chaste, with what attention I increas'd
The splendour of thy house, that ent'ring there
Thou hadst delight, and going out, with thee
Went happiness along. A wife like this
Is a rare prize ; the worthless are not rare.
Three daughters have I borne thee, and this son,
Of one of these wilt thou, O piercing grief !
Deprive me : should one ask thee, for what cause
Thy daughter wilt thou kill ? what would'st thou say ?
Speak ; or must I speak for thee ? E'en for this,
That Menelaus may regain Helena.
Well would it be, if, for his wanton wife
Our children made the price, what most we hate
With what is dearest to us we redeem.
But, if thou lead the forces, leaving me
At Argos, should thy absence then be long,
Think what my heart must feel, when in the house
I see the seats all vacant of my child,
And her apartment vacant : I shall sit
Alone, in tears, thus ever wailing her,
“ Thy father, O my child, hath slain thee ; he,
That gave thee birth, hath kill'd thee, not another,

Nor by another hand ; this is the prize
He left his house." But do not, by the gods,
Do not compel me to be aught but good
To thee, nor be thou aught but good to me :
Since there will want a slight pretence alone
For me, and for my daughters left at home,
To welcome, as becomes us, thy return.
Well : thou wilt sacrifice thy child : what vows
Wilt thou then form ? what blessing wilt thou ask
To wait thee, thou, who dost thy daughter slay,
Thou, who with shame to this unlucky war
Art marching ? is it just that I should pray
For aught of good to thee ? should I not deem
The gods unwise, if they their favours shower
On those who stain their willing hands with blood ?
Wilt thou, to Argos when return'd, embrace
Thy children ? But thou hast no right : thy face
Which of thy children will behold, if one
With cool deliberate purpose thou shalt kill ?
Now to this point I come : if thee alone
To bear the sceptre, thee to lead the troops
Th' occasion call'd, should'st thou not thus have
urg'd
Thy just appeal to Greece, " Is it your will,
Ye Grecians, to the Phrygian shores to sail ?
Cast then the lot whose daughter must be slain."
This had at least been equal ; nor hadst thou
Been singled out from all to give thy child
A victim for the Greeks. Or Menelaus,
Whose cause this is, should for the mother slay
Hermione : but I, who to thy bed
Am faithful, of my child shall be depriv'd,
And she, that hath misdone, at her return

To Sparta, her young daughter shall bear back,*
 And thus be happy. Aught if I have said
 Amiss, reply to that : but, if my words
 Speak nought but sober reason, do not slay
 Thy child, and mine : and thus thou wilt be wise.

CHORUS.

Be thou persuaded : reason bids preserve
 Our children : this no mortal can gainsay.

IPHIGENIA.

Had I, my father, the persuasive voice
 Of Orpheus, and his skill to charm the rocks
 To follow me, and soothe whome'er I please
 With winning words, I would make trial of it :
 But I have nothing to present thee now
 Save tears, my only eloquence ; and those
 I can present thee. On thy knees I hang,
 A suppliant wreath, this body, which she bore
 To thee. Ah ! kill me not in youth's fresh prime.
 Sweet is the light of heaven : compel me not
 What is beneath to view. I was the first
 To call thee father, me thou first didst call
 Thy child : I was the first that on thy knees
 Fondly caress'd thee, and from thee receiv'd
 The fond caress : this was thy speech to me :
 Shall I, my child, e'er see thee in some house
 Of splendour, happy in thy husband, live
 And flourish, as becomes my dignity ?
 My speech to thee was, leaning 'gainst thy cheek,
 Which with my hand I now caress, and what
 Shall I then do for thee ? shall I receive

* Menelaus, before he sailed to Troy, brought his daughter Hermione from Sparta to Argos, and left her there under the care of Clytemnestra.

My father when grown old, and in my house
 Cheer him with each fond office, to repay
 The careful nurture which he gave my youth ?
 These words are on my memory deep impress'd,
 Thou hast forgot them, and wilt kill thy child.
 By Pelops I intreat thee, by thy sire
 Atreus, by this my mother, who before
 Suffer'd for me the pangs of childbirth, now
 These pangs again to suffer, do not kill me.
 If Paris be enamour'd of his bride,
 His Helen, what concerns it me ? and how
 Comes he to my destruction ? Look upon me,
 Give me a smile, give me a kiss, my father,
 That, if my words persuade thee not, in death
 I may have this memorial of thy love.
 My brother, small assistance canst thou give
 Thy friends, yet for thy sister with thy tears
 Implore thy father that she may not die :
 E'en infants have a sense of ills : and see,
 My father, silent though he be, he sues
 To thee : be gentle to me, on my life
 Have pity : thy two children by this beard
 Intreat thee, thy dear children ; one is yet
 An infant, one to riper years arriv'd.
 I will sum all in this, which shall contain
 More than long speech ; to view the light of life
 To mortals is most sweet, but all beneath
 Is nothing : of his senses is he reft,
 Who hath a wish to die ; for life, though ill,
 Excels whate'er there is of good in death.

CHORUS.

For thee, unhappy Helen, and thy love
 A contest dreadful, and surcharg'd with woes,

To the Atridae and their children comes.

AGAMEMNON.

What calls for pity, and what not, I know :
I love my children, else I should be void
Of reason : to dare this is dreadful to me,
And not to dare is dreadful. I perforce
Must do it. What a naval camp is here
You see, how many kings of Greece array'd
In glitt'ring arms : to Ilium's towers are these
Denied t' advance, unless I offer thee
A victim, thus the prophet Calchas speaks,
Denied from her foundations to o'erturn
Illustrious Troy ; and through the Grecian host
Maddens the fierce desire to sail with speed
'Gainst the barbarians' land, and check their rage
For Grecian dames : my daughters these will slay
At Argos, you too will they slay, and me,
Should I, the goddess not revering, make
Of none effect her oracle. To this
Not Menelaus, my child, hath wrought my soul,
Nor to his will am I a slave ; but Greece,
For which, will I, or will I not, perforce
Thee I must sacrifice : my weakness here
I feel, and must submit. In thee, my child,
What lies, and what in me, Greece should be free,
Nor should her sons beneath barbarians bend,
Their nuptial beds to ruffian force a prey.

CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Alas, my child ! O strangers ! wretched me,

How wretched in thy death ! thy father flies thee,
He flies, but dooms thee to the realms beneath.

IPHIGENIA.

My mother, O my mother ! wretched me !

For both our fortunes, full of woe,
One strain, one mournful strain shall flow.
No more the gladsome light of day,
No more the bright sun's golden ray
Shall shine, ah me ! to cheer thy child.
Ah me ! ye Phrygian forests wild
Ye snow-clad mountains, rude that rise,
Mountains of Ida to the skies ;
Where Priam once his son unblest,
Far sever'd from his mother's breast,
Expos'd, this Paris to destroy ;
Idæus thence they call'd the boy ;
The boy they call'd Idæus, known
So nam'd through all the Phrygian town.
O that his son he ne'er had laid
Where with their herds the herdsmen stray'd,
The fountains of the nymphs among,
Where roll the lucid streams along,
And the green mead profusely pours
The blushing glow of roseate flow'rs,
With hyacinths of dusky hue,
For goddesses which lovely grew.
. Once Pallas came to those sweet glades,
And Juno deign'd to grace their shades,
And Venus fraught with wanton wiles,
Resistless with enchanting smiles,
And Hermcs, messenger of Jove,
Venus in all the sweets of love
Rejoicing, Pallas in her spear,

And, proud the bed of Jove to share,
 Juno's bright form, imperial dame,
 Once to the odious judgment came :
 For beauty and for beauty's prize
 This contest drew them from the skies,
 But death on me : yet Greece shall own
 My death assures her high renown.

CHORUS.

Diana hath accepted thee the first
 Of victims, that our arms may sail to Troy.

IPHIGENIA.

But he, to whom my birth I owe,
 Betrays and flies me 'midst my woe.
 My mother ! ah my cruel fate :
 He flies, and leaves me desolate.
 Ill-omen'd Helena, thy love
 Fatal, will fatal to me prove :
 I die, I perish, I am slain,
 My blood th' unhallow'd sword shall stain ;
 Unhallow'd is my father's hand,
 That pours it on th' empurpled sand.
 O, had the ships ne'er plough'd their way
 To Aulis, to this winding bay !
 O, had Jove giv'n the fleet to bear
 To Troy's proud shores the wafted war ;
 Not adverse winds, that sullen sweep
 Across Eubœa's angry deep !
 To some he grants the fav'ring gales
 That wanton in their flying sails ;
 Necessity to some and pain ;
 To some to cut the azure main ;
 These quit the port with gallant pride,
 Reluctant those at anchor ride.

To suff'rings born the human race
 In suff'rings pass life's little space :
 Why, since misfortunes 'round them wait,
 Should men invite their cruel fate.

CHORUS.

Alas, what woes, what miseries hast thou brought,
 Daughter of Tyndarus, on Greece ! but thee,
 Unhappy virgin, by this flood of ills
 O'erwhelm'd I wail : ah, were this fate not thine !

IPHIGENIA.

My mother, what a crowd of men I see
 Advance ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The son of Thetis with them comes,
 For whom, my child, I led thee to this strand.

IPHIGENIA.

Open the doors to me, ye female train,
 That I may hide myself.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Whom dost thou fly ?

IPHIGENIA.

Achilles, whom I blush to see.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And why ?

IPHIGENIA.

These ill-starr'd nuptials cover me with shame.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Nothing of pleasure doth thy state present.
 Yet stay : this is no time for grave reserve.

**ACHILLES, CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA,
CHORUS.**

ACHILLES.

Daughter of Leda, O unhappy queen !

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thy voice speaks nothing false.

ACHILLES.

Among the Greeks
Dreadful the clamour.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What the clamour ? say.

ACHILLES.

Touching thy daughter.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou has said what bears
No happy omen.

ACHILLES.

That she must be slain
A victim.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And doth none against this speak ?

ACHILLES.

I was with outrage threaten'd.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Stranger, how ?

ACHILLES.

To be o'erwhelm'd with stones.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Whilst thou would'st save
My child ?

ACHILLES.

E'en so.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Who dar'd to touch thee ?

ACHILLES.

All
The Grecians.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Were thy troops of Myrmidons
Not present to thee ?

ACHILLES.

They were first in rage.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Then are we lost, my child.

ACHILLES.

They cried aloud
That I was vanquish'd by a woman.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Aught
Didst thou reply ?

ACHILLES.

That her who was to be
My bride, they should not slay.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

With justice urg'd.

ACHILLES.

Nam'd by her father mine.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

From Argos brought
By his command.

ACHILLES.

In vain : I was o'erpower'd
By their rude cries.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The many are indeed
A dreadful ill.

ACHILLES.

Yet I will give thee aid.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Wilt thou alone fight with a host ?

ACHILLES.

Thou seest

These bearing arms.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

May thy designs succeed !

ACHILLES.

They shall succeed.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Shall not my child be slain ?

ACHILLES.

Never by my permission.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Will none come
To lay rude hands upon the virgin ?

ACHILLES.

Many :

Ulysses with them ; he will lead her.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What,
He of the race of Sisyphus ?

ACHILLES.

The same.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Comes he of his free will, or by the host
Appointed ?

ACHILLES.

Chosen, by his own consent.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Bad choice, to be with blood polluted.

ACHILLES.

Him

Will I keep from her.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Would he drag her hence

Against her will ?

ACHILLES.

E'en by her golden locks.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What now behoves me do ?

ACHILLES.

Be firm, and hold

Thy daughter back.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And shall she not be slain

For that ?

ACHILLES.

But he will surely come for this.

IPHIGENIA.

My mother, hear ye now my words : for thee
 Offended with thy husband I behold :
 Vain anger ! for where force will take its way,
 To struggle is not easy. Our warm thanks
 Are to this stranger for his prompt good will
 Most justly due : yet, it behoves thee, see
 Thou art not by the army charg'd with blame,
 Nothing the more should we avail, on him
 Mischief would fall. Hear then what to my mind
 Deliberate thought presents : it is decreed

For me to die : this then I wish, to die
With glory, all reluctance banish'd far.
My mother, weigh this well, that what I speak
Is honour's dictate : all the powers of Greece
Have now their eyes on me ; on me depends
The sailing of the fleet, the fall of Troy,
And not to suffer, should a new attempt
Be dar'd, the rude barbarians from blest Greece
To bear in future times her dames by force,
This ruin bursting on them for the loss
Of Helena, whom Paris bore away.
By dying all these things shall I achieve,
And blest, for that I have deliver'd Greece,
Shall be my fame. To be too fond of life
Becomes not me ; nor for thyself alone,
But to all Greece a blessing didst thou bear me.
Shall thousands, when their country's injur'd, lift
Their shields, shall thousands grasp the oar, and
dare,
Advancing bravely 'gainst the foes, to die
For Greece ? and shall my life, my single life
Obstruct all this ? would this be just ? what word
Can we reply ? nay more ; it is not right
That he with all the Grecians should contend
In fight, should die, and for a woman : no :
More than a thousand women is one man
Worthy to see the light of life. If me
The chaste Diana wills t' accept, shall I,
A mortal, dare oppose her heavenly will ?
Vain the attempt : for Greece I give my life.
Slay me, demolish Troy : for these shall be
Long time my monuments, my children these,
My nuptials, and my glory. It is meet

That Greece should o'er Barbarians bear the sway,
Not that Barbarians lord it over Greece :
Nature hath form'd them slaves, the Grecians free.

CHORUS.

Thine, royal virgin, is a generous part :
But harsh what Fortune and the goddess wills.

ACHILLES.

Daughter of Agamemnon, highly blest
Some god would make me, if I might attain
Thy nuptials. Greece in thee I happy deem,
And thee in Greece. This hast thou nobly spoken,
And worthy of thy country : to contend
Against a goddess of superior power
Desisting, thou hast judg'd the public good
A better, nay a necessary part.
For this more ardent my desire to gain thee
My bride, this disposition when I see,
For it is generous. But consider well :
To do thee good, to lead thee to my house,
Is my warm wish ; and much I should be griev'd,
Be witness Thetis, if I save thee not
In arms against the Grecians : in thy thought
Revolve this well : death is a dreadful thing.

IPHIGENIA.

Reflecting not on any this I speak,
Enough of wars and slaughters from the charms
Of Helen rise : but die not thou for me,
O stranger, nor distain thy sword with blood ;
But let me save my country if I may.

ACHILLES.

O glorious spirit ! nought have I 'gainst this
To urge, since such thy will ; for what thou say'st
Is generous : why should not the truth be spoken ?

But of thy purpose thou may'st yet repent.
 Know then my resolution : I will go,
 And nigh the altar place these arms, thy death
 Preventing, not permitting : thou perchance
 May'st soon approve my purpose, nigh thy throat
 When thou shalt see the sword : and for that cause
 I will not, for a rash unweigh'd resolve,
 Abandon thee to die ; but with these arms
 Wait near Diana's temple till thou come.

CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, CHORUS.

IPHIGENIA.

Why, mother, dost thou shed these silent tears ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I have a cruel cause, that rends my heart.

IPHIGENIA.

Forbear, nor sink my spirit. Grant me this.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Say what : by me my child shall ne'er be wrong'd.

IPHIGENIA.

Clip not those crisped tresses from thy head,
 Nor robe thee in the sable garb of woe.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What hast thou said, my child ? when thou art
 lost——

IPHIGENIA.

Not lost, but sav'd : through me thou shalt be fam'd.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What, for thy death shall I not mourn, my child ?

IPHIGENIA.

No, since for me a tomb shall not be rais'd.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

To die then, is not that to be entomb'd?

IPHIGENIA.

The altar of the goddess is my tomb.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Well dost thou speak, my child: I will comply.

IPHIGENIA.

And deem me blest, as working good to Greece.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What message to thy sisters shall I bear?

IPHIGENIA.

Them too array not in the garb of woe.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What greetings to the virgins dost thou send?

IPHIGENIA.

My last farewell. To manhood train Orestes.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Embrace him, for thou ne'er shalt see him more.

IPHIGENIA.

Far as thou could'st, thou didst assist thy friends.

To Orestes.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

At Argos can I do aught pleasing to thee?

IPHIGENIA.

My father, and thy husband, do not hate.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

For thy dear sake fierce contests must he bear.

IPHIGENIA.

For Greece, reluctant, me to death he yields.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Basely, with guile, unworthy Atreus' son.

IPHIGENIA.

Who goes with me, and leads me, by the hair

E'er I am dragg'd ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I will go with thee.

IPHIGENIA.

No :

That were unseemly.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hanging on thy robes.

IPHIGENIA.

Let me prevail, my mother ; stay : to me
As more becoming this, and more to thee.
Let one of these, th' attendants of my father,
Conduct me to Diana's hallow'd meed,
Where I shall fall a victim.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O my child,

Dost thou then go ?

IPHIGENIA.

And never to return.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And wilt thou leave thy mother ?

IPHIGENIA.

As thou seest,

Not as I merit.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Stay, forsake me not.

IPHIGENIA.

I suffer not a tear to fall. But you,
Ye virgins, to my fate attune the hymn,
" Diana, daughter of Almighty Jove."
With fav'ring omens sing " success to Greece."
Come, with the basket one begin the rites,
One with the purifying cakes the flames

Enkindle ; let my father his right hand
Place on the altar ; for I come to give
Safety to Greece, and conquest to her arms.

IPHIGENIA.

Lead me : mine the glorious fate
To o'erturn the Phrygian state !
Ilium's towers their head shall bow.
With the garlands bind my brow,
Bring them, be these tresses crown'd.
Round the shrine, the altar round
Bear the lavers, which you fill
From the pure translucent rill.
High your coral voices raise,
Tun'd to hymn Diana's praise,
Blest Diana, royal maid.
Since the fates demand my aid,
I fulfil their awful power
By my slaughter, by my gore.

CHORUS.

Reverenc'd, reverenc'd mother, now
Thus for thee our tears shall flow :
For unhallow'd would a tear*
'Midst the solemn rites appear

IPHIGENIA.

Swell the notes, ye virgin train,
To Diana swell the strain,
Queen of Chalcis, adverse land,
Queen of Aulis, on whose strand,
Winding to a narrow bay,
Fierce to take its angry way

* All mourning was forbidden amidst the sacrifices to the gods. See the *Supplicants* of Euripides, l. 327. n.

Waits the war, and calls on me
 Its retarded force to free.
 O my country, where these eyes
 Open'd on Pelasgic skies !
 O ye virgins, once my pride,
 In Mycenæ who reside !

CHORUS.

Why of Perseus name the town,
 Which Cyclopean rampires crown ?

IPHIGENIA.

Me you rear'd a beam of light :
 Freely now I sink in night.

CHORUS.

And for this, immortal fame,
 Virgin, shall attend thy name.

IPHIGENIA.

Ah, thou beaming lamp of day,
 Jove-born, bright, æthereal ray,
 Other regions we await,
 Other life, and other fate !
 Farewell, beauteous lamp of day,
 Farewell bright æthereal ray !

CHORUS.

See, she goes : her glorious fate
 To o'erturn the Phrygian state :
 Soon the wreaths shall bind her brow ;
 Soon the lustral waters flow ;
 Soon that beauteous neck shall feel
 Piercing deep the fatal steel,
 And the ruthless altar o'er
 Sprinkle drops of gushing gore.
 By thy father's dread command
 There the cleansing lavers stand ;

There in arms the Grecian powers
 Burn to march 'gainst Ilium's towers.
 But our voices let us raise,
 Tun'd to hymn Diana's praise,
 Virgin daughter she of Jove,
 Queen among the gods above.
 That with conquest and renown
 She the arms of Greece may crown.

To thee, dread power, we make our vows,
 Pleas'd when the blood of human victims flows.

To Phrygia's hostile strand,
 Where rise perfidious Ilium's hated towers,
 Waft, O waft the Grecian powers,
 And aid this martial band !
 On Agamemnon's honour'd head,
 Whilst wide the spears of Greece their terrors
 spread,
 Th' immortal crown let conquest place,
 With glory's brightest grace.

MESSENGER, CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

O royal Clytemnestra, from the house
 Hither advance, that thou may'st hear my words.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hearing thy voice I come, but with affright
 And terror trembling, lest thy coming bring
 Tidings of other woes, beyond what now
 Afflict me.

MESSENGER.

Of thy daughter have I things
Astonishing and awful to relate.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Delay not then, but speak them instantly.

MESSENGER.

Yes, honour'd lady, thou shalt hear them all
Distinct from first to last, if that my sense
Disorder'd be not faithless to my tongue.
When to Diana's grove and flow'ry meads
We came, where stood th' assembled host of
Greece,

Leading thy daughter, straight in close array
Was form'd the band of Argives: but the chief,
Imperial Agamemnon, when he saw
His daughter as a victim to the grove
Advancing, groan'd, and bursting into tears
Turn'd from the sight his head, before his eyes
Holding his robe. The virgin near him stood,
And thus address'd him, "Father, I to thee
Am present: for my country, and for all
The land of Greece I freely give myself
A victim: to the altar let them lead me,
Since such the oracle. If aught on me
Depends, be happy, and attain the prize
Of glorious conquest, and revisit safe
Your country: of the Grecians for this cause
Let no one touch me; with intrepid spirit
Silent will I present my neck." She spoke,
And all, that heard, admir'd the noble soul
And virtue of the virgin. In the midst
Talthybius standing, such his charge, proclaim'd
Silence to all the host: and Calchas now,

The prophet, in the golden basket plac'd
Drawn from its sheath the sharp-edged sword, and
bound

The sacred garlands round the virgin's head.
The son of Peleus, holding in his hands
The basket and the laver, circled round
The altar of the goddess, and thus spoke,
" Daughter of Jove, Diana, in the chace
Of savage beasts delighting, through the night
Who rollest thy resplendent orb, accept
This victim, which th' associate troops of Greece,
And Agamemnon, our imperial chief,
Present to thee, the unpolluted blood
Now from this beauteous virgin's neck to flow.
Grant that secure our fleets may plough the main,
And that our arms may lay the rampir'd walls
Of Troy in dust." The sons of Atreus stood,
And all the host, fix'd on the ground their eyes.
The priest then took the sword, preferr'd his pray'r,
And with his eye mark'd where to give the blow.
My heart with grief sunk in me, on the earth
Mine eyes were cast; when sudden to the view
A wonder; for the stroke each clearly heard,
But where the virgin was none knew: aloud
The priest exclaims, and all the host with shouts
Rifted the air, beholding from some god
A prodigy, which struck their wond'ring eyes,
Surpassing faith when seen: for on the ground
Panting was laid an hind of largest bulk,
In form excelling; with its spouting blood
Much was the altar of the goddess dew'd.
Calchas at this, think with what joy, exclaim'd,
" Ye leaders of th' united host of Greece,
See you this victim, by the goddess brought,

And at her altar laid, a mountain hind ?
 This, rather than the virgin, she accepts,
 Not with the rich stream of her noble blood
 To stain the altar ; this she hath received
 Of her free grace, and gives a fav'ring gale
 To swell our sails, and bear th' invading war
 To Ilium : therefore rouse, ye naval train,
 Your courage ; to your ships ; for we this day,
 Leaving the deep recesses of this shore,
 Must pass th' Ægean sea." Soon as the flames
 The victim had consum'd, he pour'd a prayer
 That o'er the waves the host might plow their way.
 Me Agamemnon sends, that I should bear
 To thee these tidings, and declare what fate
 The gods assign him, and through Greece t' obtain
 Immortal glory. What I now relate
 I saw, for I was present : to the gods
 Thy daughter, be thou well assur'd, is fled.
 Therefore lament no more, no more retain
 Thy anger 'gainst thy lord : to mortal men
 Things unexpected oft the gods dispense,
 And, whom they love, they save : this day hath seen
 Thy daughter dead, seen her alive again.

CHORUS.

His tidings with what transport do I hear !
 Thy daughter lives, and lives among the gods.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And have the gods, my daughter, borne thee hence ?
 How then shall I address thee ? or of this
 How deem ? vain words, perchance, to comfort me ?
 And sooth to peace the anguish of my soul.

MESSENGER.

But Agamemnon comes, and will confirm

Each circumstance which thou hast heard from me.

AGAMEMNON.

Lady we have much cause to think ourselves,
Touching our daughter, blest : for 'mongst the gods
Commercing she in truth resides. But thee
Behoves it with thine infant son return
To Argos, for the troops with ardour haste
To sail. And now farewell : my greetings to thee
From Troy will be unfrequent, and at times
Of distant interval : may'st thou be blest !

CHORUS.

With joy, Atrides, reach the Phrygian shore ;
With joy return to Greece, and bring with thee
Bright conquest, and the glorious spoils of Troy !

FINIS.







